



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

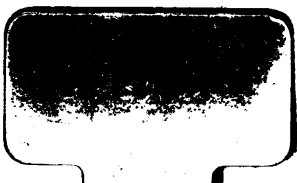
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600056946-



1



600056946-





600056946-



1

[*Reprinted from "Chambers's Journal."*]

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INCONGRUOUS MATERIALS . . .	1
II. SUCCESS . . .	21
III. FLITTING . . .	42
IV. FAIRVIEW . . .	56
V. "I AM LILIAN" . . .	78
VI. FIRST IMPRESSIONS . . .	98
VII. VANQUISHED . . .	120
VIII. THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW .	144
IX. ARTHUR TRAFFORD'S CHIVALRY .	166
X. MARIAN . . .	183
XI. CROSS-PURPOSES . . .	214
XII. UNDER-CURRENTS . . .	237
XIII. ARTHUR TRAFFORD'S TACTICS . .	251

THE LAST OF THE HADDONS.

CHAPTER I.

INCONGRUOUS MATERIALS.

"No. 81. Yes ; this must certainly be the house," I murmured, turning my eyes somewhat disappointedly towards it again, after consulting an address in my hand. A large, gloomy, dilapidated-looking house, in a respectably dull street in Westminster, its lower windows facing a dead-wall, and its upper ones over-looking venerable ecclesiastical grounds. The lower rooms appeared to be the only portion of the house which was occupied ; and, to judge by the shabbiness of the blinds, they were

kept but in a mean condition. None the less dreary was the present aspect of the house for the suggestions of bygone prosperity in the noble proportions of the entrance, with its link extinguishers on either side, and great massive doors opening from the centre. It would require a vivid imagination to picture those doors flung hospitably open, and light and warmth from within streaming down on to a gay party of the present generation, alighting before the broad steps.

“Not very promising,” was my mental comment, as I gathered courage to ascend the steps and lift the heavy iron wreath of flowers which used to be considered high art in the way of knockers. I suppose I chanced upon the one least in use; a rusty, ill-conditioned old knocker, which would not do anything until you got determined with it, and then came down with a sudden bang, which resounded through the neighbourhood. I was beginning to think that

I had made a mistake, and that the house was uninhabited after all, when I heard footsteps within, and presently one of the doors was opened a few inches, and a bony hand thrust out.

"A pretty time this to be bringing coffee that was wanted for breakfast!"

"Does Mr. Wentworth live here?"

A tall, thin, grim-visaged woman looked out, and shortly replied:

"Yes; he does."

"Is he at home? Can I see him?"

"He's at home," she slowly and reluctantly admitted; adding, as she determinedly blocked up the doorway, "but he can't see anybody; he's engaged."

"Please give this card to Mr. Wentworth, and say——"

"If it's the advertisement, you should have come before. 10 to 12 was the time."

"Please give this card to Mr. Wentworth, and——"

"It won't be any use."

"And say that I shall be greatly obliged if he will see me for five minutes."

Evidently this was a woman accustomed to have her way, at any rate with such callers as came there. The very novelty of my persistence seemed for the moment to disconcert her, as she eyed me from beneath her bent brows before replying :

"Haven't I just told you ?"

"Please to give this card to Mr. Wentworth, and say I shall be greatly obliged if he will see me for five minutes."

She appeared for a moment undecided as to whether she would shut the door in my face or do my bidding ; then ungraciously moved aside for me to pass into the hall, which I unhesitatingly did. Mumbling something to herself, which, to judge by her countenance, was the reverse of complimentary to me, she left me standing on the mat, and went into a room on the right of the square hall, the stone floor

of which was sparsely covered here and there with old scraps of carpet. I had just time to note that, poor and forlorn as everything looked, it was kept scrupulously clean, when I heard a man's voice, and the words :

"Did I not tell you?" uttered in a stern, low voice.

"I know you did ; and I told her, but she wouldn't take 'No' for an answer."

"Nonsense ! Say I'm engaged ; it's past the time. I have almost arranged with some one already. Get rid of her somehow, and do not disturb me again. I thought you prided yourself upon your ability to keep off intruders."

"This one isn't like the others," grumbled the old woman. "She goes on hammering and hammering. However, I'll soon send her off now."

A nice introduction this ! I had not really believed that she was acting under orders, and had too grave a reason for de-

siring an interview to allow a disagreeable old woman to prevent my obtaining it. I felt that an apology ought to be made before I was "sent off." Advancing to the door of the room from whence the voices came, and standing on the threshold, I said:

"Allow me to exonerate your house-keeper, sir" (it was really a pretty compliment to give that gaunt personification of shabbiness so sounding a title, and she ought to have been touched by it). "I am afraid I was more pertinacious than are the generality of intruders, in my anxiety to obtain an interview."

A gentleman sat facing me, frowning down at my card. A pen still in his hand, and the quantity of papers and pamphlets covering the large library table at which he sat, seemed to show that it had been no mere excuse about his being engaged. A tall, broad-chested man, with a fine massive head, and good, if somewhat rugged fea-

tures, looking at first sight, I fancied, about forty years of age. I saw that there were a great many books in the room, and two or three fine specimens of old carved furniture, in curious contrast with the small square of well-worn and well-mended carpet at the end of the room where he sat.

At the sight of me he laid down his pen, and pushed his chair back from the table, ruffling up his already sufficiently ruffled-up hair with a look of dismay which was almost comical. As he appeared somewhat at a loss how to answer me, I added: "I set out immediately I read the advertisement, and I hope you will excuse my being thirty-seven minutes late," looking at my watch in order to be quite correct as to time.

A smile, which had a wonderfully improving effect upon him, dwelt for a moment on his lips, and remained in his eyes.

"Will you take a seat, Miss—Haddon!"

consulting my card for the name. Then to the old woman : " You need not wait, Hannah."

Throwing a look over her shoulder at him, as though to say, " I told you," she went out and shut the door.

He placed a chair for me, then returned to the old-fashioned library-chair he had risen from, and courteously waited for me to begin. So far good—he was a gentleman.

" I will be as concise as possible. Mr. Wentworth, I am seeking a situation of some kind, and can, I think, offer as good testimonials as any one who has not had an engagement before could have. If you have not yet decided upon engaging any particular lady, I shall be much obliged by your kindly looking through these ;" taking a little packet of letters from my pocket, and placing it upon the table before him.

He was eyeing me rather curiously, and I earnestly went on :

"I have been accustomed to use both my brains and hands, and I would do my very best with either to earn a respectable living."

"I fear that I am committed in another direction," he said courteously.

"In that case, I can only hope that the lady upon whom your choice has fallen needs an engagement as much as I do," I replied, trying to stifle a sigh.

"I am extremely sorry that you should be disappointed."

"You are very kind" (for I felt that he really was sorry); "but I am accustomed to disappointments; and there is a sort of poetical justice in this, after intruding upon you as I have done," I said trying to speak lightly.

"I am very sorry indeed," he repeated.

"Pray do not think of it, Mr. Wentworth," rising from my seat; "allow me to——"

"A moment, Miss Haddon. It is of the

first importance to find the right lady willing to undertake the office, and, to be candid, I do not feel quite sure that I have succeeded."

"But if you are committed?"

"I have been considering that, and I do not think that I am wholly—only so far as having promised to communicate with one lady goes. For the moment, I could not arrange matters with my conscience. Out of a number of ladies who were good enough to notice the advertisement, only one appeared to me at all suitable. But," he added apologetically, "I ought to explain that the requirements are of a somewhat exceptional character."

"May I ask what they are, Mr. Wentworth?"

"Principally tact in dealing with incongruous materials, and the exercise of a healthy influence over a sensitive girl."

"Tact in dealing with incongruous materials," I repeated musingly. "Yes;

certainly I ought to know something about that."

Our eyes met, and we both broke into a little laugh, as he said :

"Most of us have opportunities for acquiring a little experience of the kind."

"And I think I will claim to have made use of my opportunities," I rejoined, after a moment or two's deliberation. "But the healthy influence over a sensitive girl," I went on more doubtfully ; "people hold such very opposite opinions as to what is a healthy influence. I certainly should not like to have my own weaknesses petted."

"You have been accustomed to training?"

"I have been accustomed to *be* trained, so far as circumstances could do it, Mr. Wentworth," I returned, with a half-smile at the thought of all that was implied by my word. I could not enter into my history to him ; I could not tell him what I had resigned in order to remain in atten-

dance upon my dear mother. Indeed, she had been a confirmed invalid so long a time that the giving up had ceased to cost anything; the dread of losing her having become my only trouble, though year by year the difficulty of getting the little luxuries she needed and keeping out of debt had terribly increased. When the parting came it took something from the bitterness of regret to think that she knew nothing of the difficulties which had beset us. "Still," I added, desirous of making the best of myself, and led on by his evident anxiety to select the right kind of association for his child, or whoever she was, to be as frank as himself, "mine has been an experience which ought to be worth something. One's experiences are hardly to be talked of; but I honestly think you might do worse than engage me, if it is any recommendation to have been accustomed to struggle against adverse circumstances, as I think it ought to be. My testimonials are from the

clergyman of the parish, the medical man who attended my dear mother during a long illness, and an old friend of my father's. The last is more complimentary than could be wished ; but the two first gentlemen knew me during a long heavy trial, and, as I begged them to do, they have, I think, stated only what is fair to me."

He was smiling, his eyes fixed upon me ; and I went on interrogatively :

"It is a chaperon and companion for a young girl required — your daughter or ward, I presume?"

He laughed outright ; and then I saw he was younger than I had at first supposed him to be. At most he could not be over thirty-five, I thought, a little confused at my mistake.

"No relation, and, I am glad to say, no ward, Miss Haddon. I am simply obliging a friend who resides out of town, in order to spare both him and the ladies replying to the advertisement unnecessary

trouble by seeing them here. To say that I have regretted my good nature more than once this morning would of course be impolite."

"It must have been very unpleasant for you sitting in judgment over a number of women," I said; "almost as unpleasant as for them."

"Pray do not think that I have ventured so far as that, Miss Haddon," he returned, with an amused look.

But I had not gone there to amuse him, so I simply replied :

"I think you were bound to do so, having undertaken the responsibility, Mr. Wentworth;" and returned to business, asking : "Do you think there is any chance for me?"

"I think that you would be admirably suited to the office, Miss Haddon. Mr. Farrar is an invalid; and his daughter, for whom he is seeking a chaperon, is his only child, and motherless. That may

excuse a little extra care in selecting a fitting companion for her, which every good woman might not be. There is only one thing—" He trifled with the papers before him a few moments, and then went on hesitatingly: "The lady was not to be very young."

Greatly relieved, I smiled, and put up my veil. "I am not very young, Mr. Wentworth. I was nine-and-twenty the day before yesterday."

It would be really too ridiculous to be rejected on account of being too young, when that very morning I had been trying to lecture myself into a more philosophic frame of mind about the loss of my youth, and failed ignominiously. The loss of youth meant more to me than it does to most people.

"Then we will, if you please, consider that the only objection is disposed of," he gravely replied.

"I am very glad. Only," I thought,

"you have not examined my testimonials. For one so cautious in some respects, you appear rather lax in others."

But I put them on the table before him. His friend might desire to see them, though he did not.

"Am I to write to your friend, Mr. Wentworth?"

"I was to ask you to go to Fairview as soon as you conveniently could, Miss Haddon," presenting me with a card upon which was the address—Mr. Farrar, Fairview, Highbrook, Kent.

"To make arrangements with Mr. Farrar?" I inquired, not a little surprised at the suddenness with which matters seemed to be settling themselves.

"To remain, if you are willing so to do, Miss Haddon. But I ought to state that the engagement may possibly be for only a limited period — not longer than a year perhaps. Miss Farrar is engaged to be married."

“Ah, now I understand your anxiety about her finding a suitable companion,” was my mental comment.

“She will not leave her father in his present state of health ; but in the event of his recovery, there is some talk of her marriage in a year or so.”

“I do not myself desire a long engagement, Mr. Wentworth,” I replied with a slight pressure of a certain locket on my watch-chain. If the illusions of youth were gone, certain things remained to me yet.

He looked a little curious, I fancied, but simply bowed—too much a gentleman to question about anything not connected with the business in hand.

“Was there any mention made of salary, Mr. Wentworth?”

“Salary? Oh yes. I really beg your pardon. Something was said about eighty or a hundred a year ; but there were no restrictions about it. You will find that Mr. Farrar is——”

Whatever he was about to add, he hesitated to say it; and after a moment's pause, substituted the word—"liberal. He is a man of large means, Miss Haddon."

"Eighty pounds a year certainly is liberal," I replied, rather surprised at the amount; and, in my inexperience of such matters, not taking into account the appearance a chaperon would be expected to make. The little I had hitherto been able to do in the way of money-getting had brought but very small returns. But then it had been done surreptitiously, whilst my dear mother was sleeping. She had been too anxious about me to be allowed to know that her small pension did not suffice for our expenses; and mine had been such pay as I could obtain from the shops in the neighbourhood. "I did not hope for anything so good as that," I added as I once more rose, and bade him good morning, begging him to excuse my having taken up so much of his time. "But in truth, I was getting almost

desperate in my sore need, Mr. Wentworth."

"I can only regret that a gentlewoman should be put to so much inconvenience, Miss Haddon ; although it bears out my creed, that gentlewomen are more capable of endurance than are their inferiors."

All very nice and pleasant of him ; but even while he spoke I was painfully conscious that I should have the greatest difficulty in getting out of the room as a gentlewoman should. The sudden revulsion—the great good fortune—coming so swiftly after bitter disappointment, told, I suppose, upon my physical strength, lowered by a longer fast than usual. In fact, a course of discipline in the way of bearing inconvenience was telling upon me just at the wrong moment ; and it seemed that his pretty compliment about a gentlewoman's capability of endurance was about to be proved inapplicable to me. The furniture appeared to be taking all sorts of

fantastic shapes, and he himself to be expanding and collapsing in the most alarming manner. But angry and ashamed as I felt—could anything be more humiliating than an exhibition of weakness at this moment?—I strove to smile, and say something about the heat, as with some difficulty I made my way towards the door.

“But I fear—Pray allow me,” he ejaculated, springing toward the door, where I was groping for the handle, telling myself that, if I could only get into the hall and sit there in the fresh air a few moments, all would be well again.

CHAPTER II.

SUCCESS.

"ONLY a little hungry."

Was it my voice making the humiliating confession? Had I lost my self-command and self-respect to such an extent as that! The words seemed to come from my dry lips independently of my will.

The ejaculations "Great heavens!" in one voice, and "I thought she looked a poor half-starved mortal!" in another, brought my stray senses back, and I looked about me. I was lying on a couch in a back sitting-room, smaller and more comfortable in appearance than that which I had first seen, Mr. Wentworth and his

sour-looking servant watching me. A strong unpleasant smell of burnt feathers pervaded the room. As I afterwards found, Hannah knew of no better remedy for faintness; and her master had hurriedly set light to a packet of quill pens, while she deluged my face and head with water.

“Bring some wine, and the best you have in the way of food, at once,” said Mr. Wentworth.

She quitted the room; and her master considerately went towards the window, and stood there turning over the leaves of a pamphlet until she re-entered. She carried a tray, upon which was a glass of sherry, a small basin containing something which had a very savoury odour, and some bread.

“Have you nothing better than that?” he asked.

“It’s the strong gravy I was making for your chicken,” she replied, “She couldn’t have anything better than that upon an empty stomach.”

I tried to utter a little protest; but I soon felt it was no use; I should never be able to get decently away without the little fillip which the food and wine would give me. So I took a few spoonfuls of the gravy and a little bread, trying to keep up appearances by saying that I had foolishly taken a very light breakfast, and so forth.

He accepted the explanation in an easy, matter-of-course way, saying he so frequently got into disgrace with Hannah on account of his want of appetite in the early morning that he could quite understand other people's shortcomings in the same way. Then he courteously expressed a hope that I should rest there until Hannah had prepared luncheon.

"There is no one in the house beside us three, and therefore you will not be disturbed. Quietness is about the only thing the old place has to boast of now."

"You are very kind," I murmured, at loss for words.

"In an hour or two, when you have had luncheon, and feel quite sure you are sufficiently rested, I will give you fuller particulars as to the best way of getting to Fairview. We shall meet there very shortly, I daresay, when I trust to hear that you approve of your new surroundings, Miss Haddon."

Then, touching my hand, and bowing low with old-fashioned courtesy, he quitted the room.

The old woman watched him with astonished eyes, and then turned them suspiciously on me. I could not help fancying that she was mentally repeating the words, "Meet there very shortly."

How weak I must have been to let this grim-looking, disagreeable old woman see the tears which forced themselves into my eyes. I intuitively knew that tears and weakness were the very worst weapons to use with one of her calibre. I felt that she had in her heart declared war

against me from the very moment I succeeded in obtaining an interview with her master, and, so to speak, set her at defiance. This was but an armed truce between us, if truce it was. In course of time I learned that there was another cause for her antagonism.

Her forbidding, suspicious looks had very soon the good effect of helping me towards recovery. Brushing away the tears which her master's kindness had brought to my eyes, I drank the sherry, set to work with the spoon again, and was presently able to eye her as steadily and speculatively as she eyed me."

"You will do now, till lunch is ready, I suppose?"

"I shall do now without luncheon; in five minutes I shall be able to go. Will you please tell Mr. Wentworth so; and say if he will kindly send me the further instructions he spoke about, I need not disturb him again."

"You are going to meet again?" she said (I thought, rather offensively).

"Yes, I hope so. My bonnet please. How wet you have made my hair!"

"I suppose it's most of it that new stuff that can be easily dried or replaced," she ungraciously replied, presenting my bonnet.

I did not take the trouble to vindicate my hair, simply using a towel which lay near. to press out the water as much as possible.

"I am sorry there is not a looking-glass in the room; but I can fetch one if you like."

I saw that this was meant for sarcasm, so pleasantly replied, "Yes, please."

"It's at the top of the house," she grumbled.

"In that case I will excuse you from fetching it," I replied, with amiable condescension.

She waited a moment to recover that, and then said,

"You are not going to stop to lunch, then?"

"No. Does that surprise you?"

"Yes ; it does."

"Ah, that shows that you may sometimes be mistaken."

She seemed to hesitate a moment as to whether she should carry on the war or not ; and then, I suppose, concluded to defer it, though she took unnecessary pains to show that it was only deferred, frowning angry defiance at me as she went out of the room.

She presently returned with the message that her master thought I could not be sufficiently rested, and hoped I would stay to luncheon ; adding, with a grim smile, "He is not accustomed to ladies who are given to fainting ; and does not know how soon they can sometimes get over it."


"Your master is very kind ; but I must go now."

"If you would not be persuaded, I was to give you this."

"I am much obliged to him." I replied, taking the letter she offered ; I really could

not honestly add, "and to you;" but bade her good-day as pleasantly as I could. She opened the room-door, and then the hall-door, still as it were under protest, and with the same expression of disapproval on her face. "I suppose it is a disagreeable manner that is natural to her," I thought, as I turned away. "She has not seen enough of me to form any opinion which might account for so decided an exhibition of ill-will."

I walked slowly to the park, where I sat down and rested awhile; then went on again towards home—if I could give the place I found shelter in so euphemistic a name—trying to get used to the idea of my good fortune, and to think over the arrangements that had to be made for my flitting. But I was not yet equal to anything in the way of sustained thought, only conscious, in a pleasant, dreamy kind of way, that a heavy burden was lifted off my shoulders, and that life would be possible for the next few months, without doing what it would



have been worse than death to do, had I the right to choose between life and death.

But the fresh air was doing me good ; and by the time I had reached the house where I lodged, situated in a by street west of the park. I had begun to recover my mental equilibrium. But I fancy my first proceeding after reaching my room made Becky, the small maid who occasionally did errands for me, think that I had taken leave of my senses.

" A chop, and a sixpenny cake, and a quarter of a pound of best butter, and an ounce of tea and sugar !" she repeated, staring at me with widely opened eyes, while she ran over the items, pausing at each, as though to remind me of what I was doing.

" I am expecting company, Becky," I replied, with what was meant for a reassuring smile.

But Becky was not to be so easily reassured. " Then give them a penn'oth

of shrimps, and keep the chop and the cake for yourself when they are gone," she earnestly advised.

"But it is someone I care very much for, Becky," I replied, "and I can quite afford it now—I can indeed."

Very reluctantly she took the money, and went off with a grave face to do my bidding. Then I sat down with pencil and paper to make certain calculations. I possessed fifteen shillings and sixpence in money, my clothes, and a certain packet of my dear mother's old-fashioned jewellery, with a few words written on the outside to the effect that, in the event of either illness or death, the contents were to be sold to defray expenses. I had spoken truly enough in alluding to my sore need. I had had a hard fight for existence for five long weary months, during which time I had been able to obtain no better employment than such as was to be had from shops. Embroidery, screen-painting, wool-work, illuminating, I

tried them all in turn, with very slight success in the matter of remuneration; "ladies" being, I found looked upon rather suspiciously as workers, and as a rule expected to give a great deal more labour for small pay than do the "regulars," as they are called. This arises, or did arise—women are getting wiser in these days—from the false delicacy of a few, who preferred keeping up the fiction that they were only playing at work, and so deteriorated the value of gentlewomen as workers. I soon found that it was hopeless to expect to earn a living that way; and as I had not the experience in teaching which I believed to be necessary for a governess to have, there seemed little else to turn to, if I were not fortunate enough to obtain an engagement as companion. After the expenses of my dear mother's funeral were paid, I found myself almost destitute; and though I had contrived to exist since, it was a kind of existence which could not go on much

longer. And yet there was a bright future before me, if I could contrive to get through the next eight or ten months.

Eight years before the commencement of this story, I was on the eve of marriage with Philip Dallas, and we were to set out on a voyage to Jamaica immediately afterwards. Certain plantations there, belonging to his elder brother, were going to ruin for want of an interested overlooker on the spot. Edward Dallas did not wholly depend upon the property, and was not inclined to exile himself; but as he appeared still less inclined to advance his brother's fortunes in England, Philip and I agreed to go out and reside in Jamaica until he had made a competency, which we had every reason to believe might be done in the course of a few years. We were young (both one-and-twenty), and strong, and energetic; and hoped, by careful living, to be able to return in time to enjoy the best part of our lives in England. The one and only thing which caused us to

hesitate was the dread of leaving my dear mother. But she would not hear of Philip sacrificing his prospects, or of my remaining with her. Unselfish as she was clear-sighted, she cheerfully assured us she would be more happy in the reflection that her child was the wife of a good man, and well cared for, than in keeping me by her side. She was so unmistakably in earnest that we felt we were really doing what would most conduce to her happiness in obeying her. She had her small pension which quite sufficed for her needs ; and, as she pointed out to us, she was altogether better situated than many mothers. There seemed every reason for hoping that she would live to a good old age, and we persuaded ourselves that we should be in England again in time to be a comfort to her declining years.

We had few friends, mother and I. Her limited means, and perhaps a little of the morbid sensitiveness which the refined poor are apt to acquire, prevented her moving

in the society she was so well fitted for ; and as years went by, she gradually drifted away from old associations without making new ones. By my father's family (in which he was the only son) she had never been much noticed ; and after his death, which took place when I was a child, they entirely ignored her. She had accepted the position (which now entailed straitened means), and proudly kept aloof from them. It was perhaps natural enough that the Haddons of Haddon should not approve the marriage of an only son with the vicar's penniless daughter ; the match was not, perhaps, a very prudent one, but they ought not to have forgotten that she was a gentlewoman. So little, however, did the loss of their favour trouble us that it had come to be a jest between my dear mother and me to threaten each other with the Haddons of Haddon when any little financial difficulty arose ; a jest which made us more inclined to be satisfied with things as they were.

We could imagine nothing more humiliating than being obliged to apply to the Haddons of 'Haddon for aid of any kind.

My modest trousseau was prepared, and everything packed ready for transport to the vessel in which our passage was taken. It was the evening before our wedding day, and Philip and I had been for a walk in a quiet, silent fashion of our own, taking farewell of the old country. We walked through part of the city, at peace in the soft summer moonlight after its day of unrest; and turning into a church where evening service was going on knelt down unseen in one of the high pews to join in the prayers. Then we turned our steps homewards—it would ever be home to us where my dear mother was—our hearts too full for words.

I was to spend the remainder of this last night alone with her; and, as we had previously agreed to do, Philip and I parted at the door. Ah, Philip! how good and

true, how handsome you looked, as you stood there lingering to say a few last words before I entered the house.

“Our last parting, Mary. God bless you, dear wife. Try to make our mother believe what you will be to me ; it will be her best comfort ; and remind her of our agreement. No tears to-morrow.”

Ah, me ! had sorrow not been too deep for tears there would have been nothing else on the morrow. I ran hastily upstairs—we had secured comfortable lodgings with a respectable family for her—and opened the door, looking towards her accustomed seat as I half uttered some little loving speech—only half uttered it, and then broke down with a cry of alarm. My dear mother was lying on the floor in what, for the first few moments, I imagined to be a fainting-fit. Alas ! it was more serious than that. Whether the cause was physical or mental, I know not ; it is most probable that she had suffered more about

the approaching separation between us than she herself would allow ; but she was taken up a helpless and incurable invalid, who would never again be able to move from her couch. That was the fiat issued by the medical men on the bright May morning which was to have seen me a happy bride.

It was very hard for Philip ; and, as might naturally be expected, he for a while found it difficult to accede to the sudden change in his prospects. But I knew he was not likely to blame me for acting as I did, after the first bitterness of disappointment was over. After a hurried interview with his brother, in which the latter insisted upon his keeping to his bond, and setting sail with or without me, Philip entreated me to go through the ceremony with him, and let him at least feel that he was leaving a wife, reminding me that I might soon be left alone ; and in that case it would be so much easier for me to follow him as his wife.

My courage almost gave way. I was sorely tempted to yield. But the doctors had said that, though my dear mother might not live very long, there was just a possibility that she might linger for years. Fortunately, perhaps, I had too much difficulty with the two so dear to me to have any time for indulging and analysing my own feelings. My dear mother might be excused for looking at the question only as it affected her child; and she entirely sided with Philip in wishing me to become his wife, since I insisted upon remaining with her. But I had to think for him; and strength was given me to act according to my perception. So long as my dear mother was spared to me, she must be my care, and Philip must remain unfettered. That was my decision; and they could not turn me from it by any amount of persuasion. The following day Philip set forth alone, and I remained with my mother. If, in

his disappointment, he was a little hard with me at the time, his first letter showed that he blamed me no longer.

I know now it never occurred to him that my mother's income might die with her. He had been content to take a penniless bride ; and if he gave a thought to my mother's money, it was only to rejoice that she had enough until he could more amply provide for her. Pride, self-reliance, or perhaps a little of both, prevented my telling him at the last.

She lived nearly eight years after his departure. Philip was beginning to write hopefully of being able to return within the twelvemonth, and I tried to struggle on unaided. What I should have done had things come to the worst, I know not. There was Edward Dallas ; but he was a hard man, who had taken a great deal more kindly to the delay than he had to our marriage, and I did not choose that he should know his brother's future wife re-

quired his charity. And there were the Haddons of Haddon, I told myself, with a forlorn attempt at the old jest.

Meantime, Philip's letters arrived regularly, full of life, and love, and hope. He had succeeded beyond his expectations. The estate had rapidly increased in value under his management. After he had been there a year, he was able to dictate terms to his brother, and had since acted as managing partner, with everything in his own hands. Before she died, my dear mother had the happiness of believing that Philip and I would soon be united and living in affluence. It was her greatest comfort to know that I never regretted my decision, and that Philip came in time to say that he loved and trusted me all the more for having kept to it.

As years passed on there had been observable in Philip's letters just the growth of mind which might have been expected in the man I had known at twenty-

one. I on my side did my best to make my mental growth worthy of his. But of late, when I looked at the portrait in my locket of the fair, frank, almost boyish face of my lover, I was conscious of a certain uneasiness slowly but surely taking root in my heart, though I told myself that of course he could not look like that now. Did *he* also remember the years that had passed, when he looked at the portrait he had of me? Did he reflect that a woman of nine-and-twenty could no longer look like a girl? But these reflections disturbed me only occasionally, and were soon put aside as unworthy of the woman he loved. He loved *me*, so what mattered my age?

CHAPTER III.

FLITTING.

ON opening the envelope sent to me by Mr. Wentworth, I found a five-pound note, and a few words to the effect that Mr. Farrar desired to do what was usual in the way of paying all expenses incidental to the journey and so forth, which might be incurred by the lady who accepted the engagement.

How can words express my appreciation of the good fortune which had come to me? I sat thinking over it in deep thankfulness; realizing its blessedness in the sudden renewal of faith, and hope, and

trust which it had brought to my fainting spirit. Then I presently recollected what had to be done, and went downstairs and tapped at the door of the back parlour, which was my landlady's sitting-room.

I occupied one room at the top of the house at the modest rental of five shillings a week, slipping in and out on sufferance, as it were; and I had hitherto seen very little of Mrs. Sowler, sending down my week's rent and receiving the receipt by the small maid Becky. Becky had not yet arrived at the dignity of waiting upon the first or second floor lodgers; being only a drudge to the other servants, of whom I had seen as little as of their mistress. Indeed I had no right to expect much in the way of attendance for the sum I paid. Such small services as I had received from Becky had been for the most part rendered from goodwill, and, so to speak, surreptitiously, as was the little I had been able to do for her. There was a sort of freemasonry between

us. We had been some little comfort to each other in a quiet way, and without injury to any one else; it being understood that complaining or ill speaking was undignified, and beneath people who knew how to endure. We simply helped each other to make the best of the position we found ourselves in.

Mrs. Sowler, who had been a ladies' maid, had married the butler in the family she lived with, and they had invested their joint savings in furnishing a lodging-house. She was a very great personage in the eyes of Becky, who had great reverence for elegance of attire, and considered it quite natural to be "a bit set up, when you were dressed better than your neighbours."

From the little I had seen of Mrs. Sowler I judged her to be sufficiently "set up;" but that in no way offended me.

Obedying a request to enter, I opened the door and walked in. Mrs. Sowler had

half-risen from her seat ; but at sight of me she sank languidly back again.

“ Oh, it's you, Miss—Miss——”

“ Haddon,” I smilingly suggested, taking a seat unbidden. “ I have come to pay my next week's rent, and to say that I am going away, and shall not require my room after to-morrow morning, Mrs. Sowler.”

“ Going away !” she repeated in a somewhat raised voice. “ I am sure you've had nothing to complain of here. Very few houses such as this let rooms at five shillings a week, with a member of Parliament on the first floor, and a——Why it's worth five shillings to any one who wants to be thought respectable to have letters addressed here ! Not that it makes any difference. A paltry five shillings a week is not of much consequence to me, of course ; and if you are not satisfied, you are quite welcome to go as soon as——”

“ But I am and always have been satis-

fied, Mrs. Sowler. I can assure you I have quite appreciated the advantage of having a respectable shelter at so small a cost. It is not that——”

“Then what is it? I think I have a right to ask that much?” said Mrs. Sowler, looking as though there was no exaggeration in certain rumours which had reached me to the effect that the partings with her lodgers were not always got through in the most amicable way. “If Becky has been saucy——”

“No, indeed: she has——” I was going to say—been extremely good to me; but reflected in time that Betty’s goodness to me might not impress her mistress so favourably as it did me, so quietly added—“done quite as much for me as I had any right to expect. Mrs. Sowler, I am leaving simply because I have succeeded in obtaining a situation.”

“A situation! Oh, indeed!” ejaculated Mrs. Sowler, sinking languidly back into

her seat again ; graciously adding : “ Well, you have conducted yourself in a quiet, respectable way since you have been here, and I hope you will do well.”

“ Thank you, Mrs. Sowler,” putting down the money for the week’s rent as I spoke.

“ *Good* evening ; I will send a receipt up by one of the servants. And if Becky can be of any assistance in cording your boxes or what not, I have no objection.”

“ I am much obliged. Good evening, Mrs. Sowler.”

Having thus taken leave of my landlady, I informed Becky—who had returned with her purchases, still in a state of wonderment at my extravagance—of my intended departure.

“ I thought there was something the matter !” she ejaculated, sitting down on the edge of my small bedstead and gazing forlornly at me, as the tears began to make for themselves a channel down the poor grimed cheeks.

"I have found a home, Becky," I said gently.

"I know I ought to be glad, for you could never have bored going on much longer like this; but I can't be just yet. O, Miss Haddon, dear, it isn't your mending my stockings and things; please don't think it's because of that."

"I do not think it, Becky. I am sure you care for me as much as I do for you, and we will both try to prove our friendship by sparing each other as much as possible at parting."

"You will soon find other people—lots."

"I shall find no one who will make me forget an old friend."

"Oh, miss, how can I be your friend?"

"You have been my only one here, Becky. But we will now put away sentiment, and try to make the most of the afternoon. You are to be my company."

"Me!"

"Yes. Go down to Mrs. Sowler, give

my compliments to her, and say I shall be much obliged if she will kindly allow you to spend the rest of the day with me."

"No good," returned Becky, with a very decided shake of the head.

"Tell Mrs. Sowler that I have a dress and a few other things to spare, which we might easily alter to fit you," I replied, thinking that was the best way of appealing to Mrs. Sowler's feelings.

Becky had been taken from the miserable home of a drunken mother out of charity, as she was very frequently reminded, and was not as yet considered to have any claim to wages, depending upon such odds and ends in the way of clothes as fortune might bring her.

She was quick enough to see that I had hit upon the best means of inducing her mistress to consent, and at once went down to make the request. It was graciously granted; and Becky presently returned with the front of her hair well greased, and

her face red and shining from hasty friction with soap and water and a rough towel, which was as much preparation for being company as she had it in her power to make.

I had some little difficulty at first to induce her to share my feast. She resolutely turned her eyes away from the cake.

“I’m not hungry, thank you, miss.”

But I soon succeeded in proving to her that I should enjoy it a great deal more with her assistance, and that much would have to be wasted without. “Think of having to throw plumcake away, you know, Becky!”—plumcake being an acknowledged weakness of Becky’s. Her scruples once overcome, Becky and I feasted in good earnest, enjoying our strong tea and all the rest of it in the most convivial manner. She at first tried hard not to laugh at my little jests with, I fancy, the notion that laughter was not proper for the occasion. But I soon

had her stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth, and burying her head in the bed, to prevent the sound reaching the other lodgers, in the old fashion. Such very small jokes did for Becky, and I was not going to have my first tea-party made flat and dismal. Afterwards we passed a pleasant evening patching and contriving.

“ Oh ! Miss Haddon, do you think you’d better ? Are you *quite* sure you can afford it ? ” again and again ejaculated Becky, quite overwhelmed by the magnificence of the gifts, and afraid I should afterwards suffer for the want of such treasures.

I smilingly unlocked a couple of the largest boxes, and showed her the contents—my wedding outfit, which had remained untouched, so far as linen and so forth went, for eight years. Fortunately for me, the fashion seemed to be veering round again to that which it was when they were purchased, and the two dresses I had carefully preserved as too good for ordinary wear,

would serve me for best at Mr. Farrar's until money was due to me.

"They *are* clothes!" exclaimed Becky, looking in extreme surprise at the little heaps of linen and what not.

"What did you think my boxes contained, Becky?" I inquired in some amusement.

"Well, we knowed you paid for everything you had ; but missis said you'd never be living a'most upon dry bread if there was much left in your boxes ; and as to their being heavy, master said bricks would do that !"

It was impossible to divest Becky's mind of the idea that I had suddenly become recklessly and extravagantly generous, as her heap of belongings increased ; and when I added a small box to contain them, with a key, her gratitude knew no bounds.

"My very own ! What's give me is my own ; isn't it, Miss Haddon, dear ?"

I was very decided about that.

“And if I was to run away in them, it would not be thieving, would it?”

“No; it would not be thieving; but I should be very sorry if you were to run away, for then I should not be able to find you, in case I am able to obtain a situation for you near me, by-and-by. It would be wiser as well as braver to endure a little longer, Becky.”

At which Becky screwed up her mouth, and gave me a little nod, which I knew meant enduring and staying.

Thus pleasantly was spent my last evening in the small room where I had many a time passed half the night anxiously speculating upon the chances of being able to earn sufficient to keep me. It had seemed but a forlorn hope answering that advertisement without being able to offer any testimony of previous experience. But I was becoming desperate, knowing that, if I once began to sell my small belongings in order to obtain food, it

would very soon be out of my power to accept an engagement, should one offer.

I set forth for the railway station the next morning on better terms with myself and the world than I had been for many a long day, Becky and I comforting each other at parting with a smile instead of a tear, as we had agreed to do.

What was my new home going to be like? The only impression which had been conveyed to me about Mr. Farrar had been that he was rich and liberal. Mr. Wentworth had given me no clue to the characters of either father or daughter beyond saying that the former was liberal and the latter sensitive. Liberality seemed to speak for itself; but sensitiveness might or might not be a charm, according to circumstances. A refined, self-depreciative nature is not sensitive from the same cause as is a self-loving one; and unfortunately it is not the latter kind of sensitiveness which is least prevalent. But I comforted myself with

the reflection that they must indeed be difficult to please, if one so desirous of finding a home as I was could not satisfy them.

CHAPTER IV.

FAIRVIEW.

THE station at which I stopped was about twelve miles from town, and I found that Fairview was distant a short drive from thence. I took the advice of the driver of a solitary fly in waiting, and engaged it to convey me and my luggage, instead of having the latter sent, and walking, as I had intended to do.

"They'll charge you eighteenpence for the barrow up at Fairview, and I'll take you and the luggage too for two shillings, miss," said the man, in a fraternal kind of way, which seemed to indicate that he

understood the cause of my hesitation, and put the case accordingly.

Very curiously did I gaze about me as the fly jogged slowly through part of a primitively built little village, and turned into a high road, the ground rising the whole way. I caught sight of some exquisite bits of Kentish scenery; beautifully wooded hill and dale, with picturesque-looking homesteads dotted about it; and pictured to myself a delightful old family house to match the scene—a gable end or mul-lioned window appearing here and there amidst grand old elms, with rooks cawing about them. Dwelling upon this picture, I did not notice that we had left the main road and turned into a newly-made one branching from it, leading to the top of a hill.

It was only as the fly turned sharply in at some showy-looking lodge gates that an enormous structure of bricks and mortar—a modern palace—met my view. Even

as I was driven round the sweep, something, which I then tried to persuade myself was its size and grandeur, but to which I now give a different name, jarred upon me, and dispelled all my rosy visions of a country home.

A man-servant came out to see to my luggage, looking somewhat surprised at my paying the driver myself, and methodically counting my boxes before ascending the steps. At the hall-door I was received by another servant, and conducted to what he termed the library—a large and lofty room, furnished in costly modern fashion. “But where were the books?” I asked myself, gazing around. How jealously they were guarded, if they were kept in those closed and lined book-cases! There was not a book nor a paper to be seen, and all the elaborate appliances for study looked new and entirely unused. I could only suppose that Mr. Farrar had taken a dislike to the room, and gathered his favourite

authors about him in some cosy study, where ideas would flow more freely.

I sat waiting as patiently as might be, for about ten minutes, when the manservant looked into the room :

“ Will you come this way, if you please, miss ?”

I rose and went across the hall, where he threw open a door and ushered me into a large drawing-room, gorgeous with amber satin hangings and gilded furniture, immense pier-glasses, and every conceivable expenditure in the way of decoration. Still no one to be seen ! It almost looked as though I had been taken from room to room in order that I should be duly impressed with the Fairview grandeur. But I presently found that there were other things besides furniture in the room—beautiful works of art, collected from all parts of the world. Indeed they were in such excess as to destroy the general effect, by fatiguing the eye. One longed to iso-

late them from their too brilliant surroundings and examine them at leisure.

I had contrived to forget where I was and what had brought me there, in examining some treasures on an engraving-stand, when the man again made his appearance :

“Mr. Farrar will be glad to see you, if you will please to step this way, miss.”

Mr. Farrar at last ! I rose and followed the servant across the hall again, feeling anything but as calm and collected as I tried to appear. I was, in fact, oppressed with a sudden dread lest I should not find favour in Mr. Farrar’s sight, and the consciousness that when I had given the change out of the note to him, I did not possess sufficient money of my own to pay my fare back to my old lodgings again. I suppose the self-restraint which was necessary to conceal my anxiety made me appear to greater disadvantage than usual. Whatever the cause, I was very soon made to

understand that first impressions were unfavourable to me.

"I did not expect you to arrive so early, Miss Haddon," were the first words, not very graciously uttered, which met my ears as the doors closed behind me.

"I thought it best to come at once Mr. Farrar, in case you should require——"

"O yes; very right—very right and proper."

The *haut en bas* in the tone strengthened me in a moment, bracing my nerves as suavity and gentleness would not have done.

"I presume you heard from Mr. Wentworth respecting——"

"Yes, O yes; I received a letter this morning apprising me of his success in finding a lady to act as chaperon to Miss Farrar. Pray be seated, Miss—O yes—Haddon, Miss Haddon. Unfortunately, I am just at present an invalid. It is that, in fact, which necessitates the engaging a lady to act as chaperon to Miss Farrar."

Miss Farrar again ; not his child ; not his motherless girl, but Miss Farrar ! I bowed, leaving him to proceed.

“Not that she is the only lady here ; my—sister resides with me, Miss Haddon. But she—in point of fact, she belongs to the old school, and therefore is not altogether fitted—that is, she is independent of anything of the kind, and does not care to undertake the duties required. I came to the conclusion that a somewhat younger lady would be more fitted for the office, and consequently begged my friend, Mr. Wentworth, to undertake the selection of a lady for me.” He paused a moment, then went on, half interrogatively, I thought. “He understood that it was a desideratum that the lady should be one accustomed to the best society, and in other respects a suitable companion for a young lady who will, at a future period, be the wife of a man of family holding a distinguished position in the world.”

This was serious. A lady accustomed to the best society, and capable of inducting a young girl into the mysteries (they were mysteries to me) of fashionable life. The only society I had been accustomed to was that to be found in my dear mother's sick room, and such faded gentility as people who live about in second-class lodgings are likely to meet with. Undoubtedly my dear mother was a gentlewoman, and Philip a gentleman, according to my creed ; but what society might think about it I did not know.

I anxiously debated the matter in my own mind for a few moments. Was I justified in accepting the position ? What if I gave Mr. Farrar an exact account of my past life, and left him to decide ? I could have done so without a moment's hesitation to Mr. Wentworth. But I very quickly came to the conclusion that it would not do here. The cold, calculating eyes, narrow brow, and heavy loose lips seemed

to indicate a very different character to that of his friend; and it was therefore probable that he had a very different standard as to what constitutes a gentlewoman. Then there arose the difficulty—could I satisfy my own conscience in the matter? which presently brought me back again to the question, what constitutes a gentlewoman? and I resolved to make the attempt.

He had been drumming his fingers on the arms of his chair, waiting, I suppose, rather impatiently for some sort of rejoinder to his peroration; but I was obliged to think the matter carefully over in my own mind, and he had to wait a few moments. He was probably not in the habit of being kept waiting for a reply, as he went on in a somewhat irritated tone:

“Mr. Wentworth informs me that you are well connected, Miss Haddon?”

The best speech he could have made in

the way of leading up to what I felt obliged to say, and yet rather shrank from saying :

"My father was a Haddon of Haddon, and held a commission in the Guards, Mr. Farrar," I replied, hardly able to repress a smile at the thought of making them useful to me at last and in this way. If they were of any service to me now, it would be for the first time.

"Oh, indeed ; very good ; the Haddons of Haddon. Yes ; that is satisfactory, certainly — Haddons of Haddon ; *quite* satisfactory."

I could only smile, making a deep mental courtesy to the Haddons of Haddon. To think of my former want of reverence for so great a power !

With a wave of the hand he graciously went on :

"I was sure I might trust to Mr. Wentworth's discrimination. I hope you will soon feel at home here, Miss Haddon" (I

could not help noticing that the name was uttered in quite a different tone now); "I keep a good housekeeper, and I trust you will find all the servants in my establishment treat you with proper respect."

"One generally gets one's desserts in that way, I suppose, Mr. Farrar," I replied smilingly; "I will try to deserve their respect."

He looked a little dubious.

"A strong hand—a firm hand." Then, I fancy, reverting to the Haddons of Haddon again, he added pleasantly: "But of course they will be kept in their place by you. And now, perhaps, you would like to see my daughter."

"Allow me first to give you the change from the five pounds, and to thank you, Mr. Farrar."

"Oh, yes; Wentworth mentioned something about it. He knows I like everything of that kind done in a large spirit. No consequence—no consequence at all,

Miss Haddon," as I put the change on to the table at his elbow, and mentioned something about third class, the cost of which was all I had deducted.

"I am sorry you came third class, Miss Haddon. But in future it must be always first, as befits a lady of gentle breeding."

"You are very kind."

"Not at all—not at all." He rang the bell within reach of his chair, and inquired of the man who obeyed the summons: "Is Miss Farrar in, Drew?"

"No, sir."

"Show this lady to the morning-room;" adding, after a moment's hesitation: "Mrs. —Tipper is there, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

He half rose from his chair, keeping his hands on the arms, and bowed to the Haddons of Haddon. Their representative bent low in return, then once more followed the man-servant.

What a palace the place seemed in

size! I was ushered into a fourth great room, although I was much relieved to find that this last had an entirely different aspect from the others I had seen. A cheerful home-like room, with windows to the ground, looking on to terraces and flower-gardens, and different in every best way from the show-rooms to which I had previously been introduced. I breathed a sigh of relief; quite refreshed by the sight of books, work, an easel, etc., the usual pretty feminine litter of a morning-room. Some one at any rate played at having ideas here.

But a slight cough drew my attention to a corner of the room near one of the open windows; and I saw a lady rising from an easy-chair—a short, stout little lady, of about sixty years of age, who could never have resembled her brother at any time, and was a great deal pleasanter to look at now. To me she was quite pretty in a homely, motherly way, with bright

blue eyes, a mouth used to smile, and a dear little button of a nose, which combined charmingly with all the rest. The simple honesty and thorough good-nature so evident in every line of her face appealed directly to my heart; and I felt that if she and I did not become friends, the blame would rest with me. The sight of her was my first welcome to Fairview.

"You are the lady——" she began, a little hesitatingly.

"My name is Mary Haddon, and Mr. Farrar has just engaged me to act as companion to his daughter, madam."

"Oh, indeed—O yes, I am charmed I am sure. Charmed to make your acquaintance, Miss Haddon. Lovely weather we are having, are we not?" with a tone and manner in such singular contrast with her appearance that I was for the moment dumb with astonishment. She half extended her hand, then drew it back again, and gave me a stiff little bow instead. "May

I offer you any refreshments after your journey, Miss Haddon ?”

I declined rather stiffly, not a little chilled and disappointed. One really had a right to expect something different from this homely, good-natured-looking little woman. She appeared rather at a loss what to do next, and presently hoped I was not fatigued with the journey.

No ; I was not fatigued with the journey. Then, after a moment or two’s reflection, I went on :

“The truth is, I am not a fine lady, Mrs. Tipper ; I have been accustomed to all sorts of endurance, poverty amongst the rest, and it takes a hard day’s work to fatigue me.”

It was an inspiration. In a moment her whole bearing changed to one which appeared to come a great deal more naturally to her.

“I am heartily glad to hear it, my dear. I mean, about your not being a fine

lady, you know. It does make such a difference, does it not? Do come and sit in this chair, and make yourself comfortable, if you are *quite* sure you won't have a little snack before lunch! Or perhaps you would like to be shown to your room at once? Make yourself at home—now do."

I smilingly seated myself on the chair by her side, explaining that I preferred sitting a short time with her, if she would allow me. Half an hour with this kind old lady—I knew now that my first impression had been a correct one, and that she was as kind and good as she looked—would help me to become better acquainted with Fairview. After once more suggesting refreshments, in a kindly, fussy, homely fashion, she drew her chair closer to mine, and proceeded to take me into her confidence.

"To tell the truth, I have been quite uncomfortable at the thought of your coming—no, not *your* coming, my dear, but

the sort of lady I was afraid you were going to be. The relief it is to see you as you are, instead of being some grand lady too fine to speak to me as some of the great people who come here are, is more than I can tell." Here she became amiably afraid lest I should think she meant to imply that I was not a lady, and anxiously began to apologise and explain ; but I soon succeeded in setting her mind at ease upon that score, and she was chatting confidentially on again. "You see, my dear, I am not a lady."

I smiled.

"Like myself, you are not a *fine* lady, perhaps, Mrs. Tipper."

"It's very kind of you to say it ; but *I* know the difference between us, my dear," she replied, her eyes beaming with kindness. "Jacob would be very vexed with me if he knew I said it to you ; but if I did not, you would soon find it out for yourself ; and I am sure you would not like me any

more for pretending to be different in the the beginning, would you ?”

“I should be very sorry to see you different, Mrs. Tipper,” I replied in all sincerity.

“I don’t know, my dear. It’s been very trying for Jacob. But I tell him it’s no use beginning now. I am too old to learn new ways, you know ; not that I haven’t tried ; no one could have tried harder than I did, when Brother Jacob brought me to live with him ; it was only my duty so to do. Between ourselves, I took lessons of a lady who advertises to teach ease and elegance to those unaccustomed to society. Worked hard, that I did, making curtsies and all the rest of it ; but it wasn’t much use. I can manage pretty well when there’s a large party, and I’ve only got to smile and bow, and say, I’m charmed to see you, and all that, but, as I told Jacob, it would never do with a lady living with us. You must not think that Jacob is not kind,

for he is very kind. He was not so ashamed of his old sister as to let me live somewhere out of the way by myself, as I wanted him to do, when first I was left a widow. He wouldn't hear of it, my dear ; and though I know he feels the difference between me and his great friends, and of course it's trying to have a sister named Tipper, he always treats me in the kindest way. You must excuse my saying all this to you, my dear ; but really you look so kind, and I thought it was just as well for you to know the worst about me in the beginning."

"You have begun in the kindest way possible for me, in giving me the hope that I have found a friend, Mrs. Tipper," I replied, lifting the hand she had laid upon mine to my lips.

"You said you have seen my brother, and that it is all settled about your staying with us ?" she inquired, looking a little doubtful ; not, I fancy, quite understand-

ing how it was that I could satisfy tastes so very opposite as were her brother's and her own.

"Yes ; Mr. Farrar was quite satisfied," I returned, half smiling as I thought of the very different means by which he had been satisfied. Not for the world would I have introduced the Haddons of Haddon here !

"And I am sure I am a great deal more than satisfied, and so will Lilian be ; though you must not think she is like me ; no, indeed—my darling is quite a lady, like her mother before her. My brother's wife was a beautiful young creature, and as good as she was beautiful. It was said that she had married him for his money ; but no one who knew her would believe that. It was a love match on both sides, and poor Jacob was never the same after her death. Lilian was almost a baby when her mother died, and Jacob kept the promise which he made to his wife on her

death-bed. Lilian was sent to a lady who was a connexion of her mother's, where she was brought up, and did not come home to stay until six months ago, when her education was finished. You will find her everything a lady ought to be."

I was a little dubious upon that point. The idea of Mr. Farrar's daughter "finished" was rather depressing; and I became somewhat *distracte* as Mrs. Tipper went gently ambling on about Lilian's beauty, Lilian's accomplishments, elegant manners, and so forth. But it presently occurred to me that a "finished" young lady might possibly be inclined to be critical about the appearance of her chaperon, and I asked the kind little lady to allow me to go to my room. She rang the bell, and the man-servant summoned a housemaid, by whom I was conducted to a bedroom so large and luxuriously furnished that, in my ignorance, I imagined she must have made a mistake, and brought me to one of

the state chambers, until I noticed my boxes with the covers and straps off. She pleasantly offered her assistance in unpacking, adding the information that she was appointed to attend to my bedroom bell for dressing or what not. This was grandeur indeed ! I could not help noticing the contrast between this well-trained and well-dressed servant and poor Becky, and made a mental vow to procure equal advantage for the latter as soon as I had it in my power so to do.

I told Lucy that I was accustomed to wait upon myself, and should therefore trouble her very little, dispensing with her assistance for the present.

CHAPTER V.

"I AM LILIAN."

I STOOD for a few moments at the window in contemplation of the beautiful view of the surrounding country, so wide and varied and well wooded ; then, afraid of the sentiment which was creeping upon me again, I turned away, and set resolutely to work at unpacking. After putting my small belongings into something like order, I proceeded to make the best of myself for presentation to "Miss Farrar." It was the first time I had seen myself from head to foot as I now did in the large cheval glass, and I gazed not a little curiously, as well as anxiously

and critically, at the *tout ensemble*. What should I look like to a lover who I knew was an admirer of women's beauty in the way a good man can admire it? What did I look, to myself?

For the first few moments I experienced a thrill of altogether agreeable surprise. I really had no idea my figure was so good. "Tall, *élancée*, head well-shaped and well-poised," I thought, pleasantly checking off my perfections up to that point. With my face I was far from being as well satisfied. I tried to persuade myself that it was because I was more accustomed to it, and that such familiarity breeds contempt; but is one ever familiar with one's own face? I can only say I was looking very discontentedly at mine, forgetting that the very discontent was reflecting itself.

Too much squareness about the brow, too decided a mouth and chin, and eyes—well, if they ever looked soft, as well as large and dark, I had not seen it. Then

the complexion, it might do for some people, but Philip's wife ought to have more colouring and softness, more general loveliness than this. Philip's wife! She ought to be a child of light, "beautiful with all the soul's expansion," the expression of her face ever varying with the dainty colouring of her graceful poetic thoughts.

I was still picturing to myself the kind of woman Philip's wife ought to be, frowning the while at a dark, discontented face, frowning discontentedly back at me, when the door was softly opened, and turning hastily round, my eyes fell upon a young girl standing upon the threshold.

"I beg your pardon; I do not think you heard me knock, and I could not wait. I am Lilian."

How shall I describe Lilian Farrar? I *have* described her. A child of light, "beautiful with all the soul's expansion;" the expression of her face ever varying with the dainty colouring of her graceful poetic

thoughts. I need only add that she had deep blue eyes, shaded by long lashes, straight, delicately-chiselled little nose, sweet sensitive mouth, pale-brown hair, and the figure of a graceful child just merging into womanhood.

"May I come in, please?"

Might love and loveliness, and youth, all that is true, and sweet, and good, come in? But I only bowed, and held out my hand with a smile.

"I am so sorry I did not know when to expect you, Miss Haddon."

"I came earlier than I ought to have done."

"Oh no, pray do not think that; only I should like to have been at the station to make friends at the beginning."

"Let us call this the beginning."

She drew near to me, and in a caressing, child-like way lifted up her mouth to be kissed, as she said:

"Welcome to Fairview."

I am not considered to be demonstrative, but I know I kissed her as heartily as she kissed me, quite understanding that this was not like an ordinary first meeting. Then she gently impelled me towards a low chair, and knelt down beside me.

"If you could only know how very anxious I have been, and how relieved I am."

"Relieved?" I asked, bending down to get a better view of the sweet face.

"Yes; indeed I am."

"Then you can in a measure understand my sensations," I replied, smiling down into her eyes.

"Oh yes; but you could go if you did not like us, you know."

"And you could dismiss me if you did not like me."

"I did not think of that; I was only afraid—companion means so much, does it not?—how hard it would be for me if I

cared for you, and you only cared to be here because——"

"Of the salary I received?"

"Oh, pray do not think that I meant that. May I say exactly what I was thinking of, Miss Haddon?"

"Pray do."

"Then I meant that it would be bad for me if you looked down upon the Farrars, if you were ever so nice, or even if you looked down upon the Tippers. I have just seen papa, and he says you belong to great people. That rather frightened me, until I saw dear old auntie, and found that she only knew you were nice, when I began to hope."

"I shall soon set your mind at ease about all that," I cheerfully replied. "Meantime, believe this much—I have begun to look up to Mrs. Tipper."

"What a nice kind thing to say, Miss Haddon."

"What a pleasant thing to feel, Miss Farrar."

She made a little *moue* at the "Miss Farrar," and I went on :

"You are very young, are you not?"—
younger than I expected to find you."

I was going to add for an engaged young lady, but thought it better to let the allusion to her engagement come first from her.

"Only just turned seventeen," she replied with a little sigh.

"Is that so very depressing?"

"Dear Miss Haddon, if I may tell you about myself, we shall feel more at home with each other?"

"Tell me anything you please, my dear ; and try to believe this much—you may trust me."

"I believed that the very first moment I looked at you. Yours is a face to trust."

"Is it—is it?" I murmured, smoothing

the hair back from her white brow. "That is indeed something to be thankful for. And now I can ask with a clear conscience, why it is a trouble to be only seventeen?"

"Because, dear Miss Haddon, I am engaged; and Arthur—that is his name you know—does not like waiting until I am older, to be married. Papa says he must wait at least a year, and Arthur does not like it. Of course I should prefer waiting. I am sure we could not possibly be happier than we are now, and I should not like leaving papa—I will not, until he is quite well again—but I do not like Arthur to be disappointed either."

"Mr. Farrar told me of the engagement."

"But I do not think that papa told you of one thing, which is the very best of all. Arthur first met me at a garden-party, given by one of our grand neighbours, just after I came home for good; and he had not the least idea that papa was rich when

he began to care for me. He liked me for myself—only for myself!" with a grave little nod at me. "He was quite surprised when he found that I was an heiress. Do you know, he often says that he should prefer having to work for me; only, of course, that need not be."

I read her thought, and my heart went out to Lilian Farrar, as I smilingly replied :

"He gives one that impression."

"Do you know him?" she inquired, looking a great deal surprised.

"Enough for that, I think. Mr. Wentworth, is he not?"

"Mr. Wentworth!" she ejaculated. "What made you think that? No: Arthur is an intimate friend of Mr. Wentworth's."

I saw that I had made a mistake. But I was so much impressed in Mr. Wentworth's favour that the fact of her lover being his intimate friend seemed a suffi-

cient guarantee of the latter's claims to respect.

"They were at Eton and Oxford together, and Arthur likes him very much," she continued, as though she, on her side, considered that was saying a great deal in Mr. Wentworth's favour.

"A barrister, is he not?"

"Yes; but he has not been very successful as yet, though he works very hard—writes for newspapers and magazines; and I am sure it is very good of him, for Arthur says he was brought up in the greatest luxury by a rich uncle, and always led to believe that he would be the old man's heir. But just as he was leaving Oxford, his uncle married a young girl, and when he had children of his own he quite discarded his nephew. But he is like Arthur, and does not care about the money; he is a great deal more troubled about having lost the old man's good-will. Arthur says that he lives in an old tumble-

down house—which is all he possesses of his own—with one servant, in the poorest way, and very rarely visits anywhere but here. Even here he does not come half often enough to please us, we all like him so much. Singular that both Arthur and he should commence life with large expectations, and both find themselves penniless, is it not? Mr. Trafford, Arthur's father, was unfortunate in some speculations, I believe; and the estates had to besold after his death."

I said something to the effect that it was fortunate that they were equal to the position. Later, I found that her lover's father had squandered his property in the worst kind of extravagance.

A gong was being sounded, and she rose, putting her hand under my arm.

"You must be wanting luncheon, Miss Haddon. Auntie said that she could not prevail upon you to take any refreshment."

I was beginning to feel hungry, and acknowledged that I was. As she went

down, she explained that her father had of late taken to invalid habits, and did not join them at table. We found Mrs. Tipper only in the dining-room ; a large, lofty room, furnished with the same heavy grandeur of style which had struck me in the other parts of the house.

But a change had come over Mrs. Tipper since I had left her. Her genial good nature was veiled by the same stiffness and constraint which had jarred upon me at first, as she politely trusted I should find something I could eat, regretted not having known that I should arrive early, so that she might have given orders accordingly, and so forth.

"The Haddons of Haddon !" I thought. She had seen her brother, and been awed by them. But I really could not allow them to come between this dear old lady and me, and therefore replied, I had been accustomed to live so plainly that this was quite a banquet to me ; as indeed it

was. I saw that I lost ground a little with the man-servant in attendance by my candour; but I could afford to wait for his better appreciation. Mrs. Tipper hesitated a moment when she reached the head of the table, and signified by a gesture her wish for me to take my seat there; in fact, I know now, as I guessed then, that she was only too glad to slip out of taking any prominent position in the household. But I very decidedly shook my head, and passed down, replying to her little protest that it was not to be thought of—it would not be right. I saw that she understood me to mean that it would not be etiquette, and sat down contented. Could the dear little lady have known it, my ignorance of the ways of the fashionable world was greater than her own. To my amusement, Mrs. Tipper's superiors in such knowledge have succumbed to the magic words, "It would not be right," with which, knowing no other code, I have occasionally ventured to settle

a question. To certain people, "It is not right," solely means "It is not etiquette," than to sin against which there is no greater wrong, and they have occasionally yielded to me because they have supposed me better acquainted with the newest mode, rather than imagine that I could have the audacity to attempt innovations of my own.

I soon succeeded in making matters pleasant with Mrs. Tipper again. In five minutes the Haddons of Haddon were forgotten, and we were getting through luncheon in friendly agreeable fashion. There was a slight obtuseness on Richard's side when I required anything; but he found that his forgetfulness did not in the slightest degree disturb me, nor prevent my obtaining what I wanted. I quietly waited; and as he could not let me repeat a request more than once without drawing the attention of the others to his negligence, he came at length to understand that it was just as well to do a thing

at once as to be quietly forced to do it. The attention of both Lilian and her aunt was too much concentrated upon me for them to notice the man's remissness, and I did my best to prevent them seeing it. I knew that Lilian's eyes were turned upon me more than once when I was supposed to be unobservant, and thought of her words, "Companion means so much," with all the more respect for her judgment, whatever it might prove to be.

That we two should be friends, I knew. I should love her, and I believed that she might come to love me. But would ours be as the companionship of two of the same age? Should I ever be able to lay bare my inmost self, living so intensely and so differently to the Mary Haddon most people knew, to this young girl? She had spoken of her love to me; should I be able to speak of mine to her—the love which was deeper and stronger than a girl's love? It was with something akin to pain that I told

myself, no. Because it was not the love of a girl ; because it was in its heights higher and in its depths deeper ; because it was in its strength and weakness so much more human at eight-and-twenty than at seventeen, I could not talk about it to Lilian Farrar. The shadowy, poetic sentiment which clings about a young girl's dream, the love which is more in love with love than with the lover was not mine. I am an old woman now, writing a story for men and women, and therefore I will add that I have still quite as much romance and enthusiasm in my composition as I had at seventeen, which is an admission to make in these days ; but, at eight-and-twenty I persuaded myself that they were or ought to be dead. In truth, my eight-and-twenty years were pressing upon me rather too heavily for mental health. I could not take kindly to the idea that youth was gone, nor recognise that the best of me was not necessarily gone with it. But there is no

need for me to analyse and dwell upon my weaknesses here ; they will be apparent enough as I go on, and will doubtless preach their own moral without my assistance.

After luncheon, we returned to the pretty morning-room where I had first seen Mrs. Tipper, and devoted the afternoon to making better acquaintance with each other. I began by telling my own little story (so far as it could be told with Philip left out) about my dear mother's long illness, the struggles I had had to obtain a living when alone, and so forth, because I wished to appear in my true colours to these two, and, above all, wished to get rid of the Haddons-of-Haddon tone in our future intercourse. Then dear old Mrs. Tipper came out grandly with her little story respecting past ups and downs, not even omitting the fact that her deceased husband had been messenger (between ourselves, odd man, my dear) in the firm where her brother rose to be chief, and how he had been pensioned

by "dear Jacob," and ended his days in peace and comfort in a cottage of his own at Holloway, all the grandest visions of his youth realised.

Afterwards, Lilian told how her father had risen in life entirely by his own efforts; whilst her colour deepened with an equally right pride as she added that her mother had been a gentlewoman, to whose foresight her child owed the education that was something better than any her father's money alone could have purchased. As Mrs. Tipper had informed me, it had been Mrs. Farrar's dying wish that the first fifteen years of her child's life should be spent with an old friend and distant connection of her own. She had not erred in her judgment.

Notwithstanding her naturally good disposition, Lilian would have suffered from the disadvantages consequent upon being brought up in luxury, the petted heiress of a wealthy man, instead of spending her

early years at a country vicarage in wholesome study and exercise. I could understand now how it happened that Mr. Farrar's daughter was so refined and different from what might have been expected. I knew now why it gratified her so much to believe that her lover had not sought her for her money's sake. Any one but herself would have thought it natural enough that she should be sought for her own sake. How true, and good, and sweet she was, and how soon one knew it, there being no mysterious complications in her nature which it would take time to discover.

"To think of our having so dreaded the lady-companion, auntie; and to think of my having pleaded so much with papa against engaging one?" ejaculated Lilian, when, after a very pleasant afternoon, we rose to go to our rooms and dress for dinner.

"We did dread her, did we not, dear?" smilingly returned the old lady, putting

her hand upon mine ; "though I had the most cause for dread."

"Indeed you had not—your cause is mine," very decidedly said Lilian.

That they could say so much before me was sufficient, had I not already arrived at the agreeable conclusion that I had found a home until Philip's return.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

I DID the best I could in the way of adorning for dinner with some of my dear mother's old lace, and a cherry-coloured bow or two on my black silk dress, and flattered myself that I was presentable enough for a family party. But, on entering the drawing-room, I was somewhat dismayed to find Lilian in full evening dress. To my unaccustomed eyes her elaborate toilet appeared more suited to a ball-room than for dinner, and my taste in this case served as well as knowledge, for I know now that it was too much for home-

dress, according to the decrees of society. I think she saw what was passing in my mind, for she apologised in her half shy, graceful way by asking me to excuse it. It was "a fancy of papa's to see her so; and she liked to gratify his slightest fancies now."

Mrs. Tipper had also made more change than seemed necessary for home toilet, and did not look at home in her rich moire and too massive jewellery, put on haphazard, as it were; brooches stuck in upside down and on one side, as though it were enough for them to be there; rings, bracelets, etc., glittering with diamonds and other precious stones, not combined in the best taste.

But I soon had something to think of besides our toilets. Lilian whispered to me that "he" had arrived; and when presently Mr. Trafford entered the room and was introduced to me, my attention was concentrated upon him.

Interested as I already was in Lilian

Farrar, I was more than curious to see her lover. Moreover I was altogether inclined in his favour. No one could be more prepossessed in another's favour than I was in Arthur Trafford's; and yet I had been in his society barely half an hour before I was conscious of being a little disappointed. Whether my expectations had been too exalted, or there was some grave cause for the disappointment, time would show. I certainly had expected to find Lilian's lover and Mr. Wentworth's friend very different from the fashionable-looking young man before me.

His bearing was that of a gentleman, and he was handsome—some might say very handsome. I would not allow even that much, in my disappointment, telling myself that his head wanted more breadth, that his features were too delicately chiselled for manly beauty, and that his hands were too small, and soft, and white. The very grace of his figure offended me, as indi-

cating lack of power. What does the world want with graceful men, with hands incapable of grasping anything ?

I had been prepared to like him for Lilian Farrar's sake, and already I was unpleasantly conscious that I might learn to dislike him for her sake. I tried to persuade myself that I was too hasty in my judgment—that his might be the type of manly beauty—the refined delicacy which in certain instances has accompanied a fine order of intellect. But no ; Shelley had a different brow from that, and something very different looked out of Shelley's eyes.

While I was summing him up in this uncompromising way, I am bound to acknowledge that he was most courteously trying to make talk with me. Lilian had introduced us in her pretty graceful way, informing us that we were to become great friends ; and he had taken the hint, making himself specially attentive and agreeable to me during dinner. He talked well, and ap-

peared well read ; and I must do him the justice also to say that his bearing towards Mrs. Tipper was all that it should be, with no perceptible undercurrent of pride or satire. Above all, I must acknowledge that his love for Lilian was sincere ; no woman could for a moment have doubted that ; whatever its value in other respects it was sincere. And yet I was perverse enough not to be satisfied with him. Why could I not take to him ? I irritably asked myself, conscious that I had not sufficient grounds for my prejudice, and ashamed of feeling it. But there it was, and I could not overcome it.

Mr. Farrar joined us in the drawing-room, which was lighted up as if for a large assembly, for an hour after dinner ; and I, who had been accustomed to note certain signs and symptoms in an invalid, could see that the effort cost him a great deal. He was, however, not too weak to tell me the cost of building and furnishing Fairview ; that he had paid two hundred and

fifty pounds for the grand piano ; a guinea a yard for the curtains ; that the carpet had been made to his special order, etc. ; whilst Mrs. Tipper was smiling amiably in her after-dinner nap, her fat little, jewelled hands folded at her capacious waist ; and Lilian and her lover were sauntering amongst the flowers in the moonlight outside.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, Mr. Farrar told me there were to be all sorts of entertainments given at Fairview—dinner-parties, garden-fêtes, and so forth. Then he named two or three City magnates as his friends, and went more fully into the Trafford pedigree for my edification, dwelling enjoyably upon the idea of being father-in-law to a Trafford. “The Warwick Traffords, you understand, Miss Haddon. It is very essential that should be remembered.” Going on to point out the great things which might be expected from such an alliance : “With money as well as birth, Arthur Trafford would be able to enter

Parliament, and make some mark in the world." All of which proved that he, too, had faith in the young man's capabilities.

I know now that it was Arthur Trafford's evidently sincere admiration for things great which misled so many who knew him. Were he capable of doing the deeds he could admire, he would have been what he had the credit for being. When I heard him dilate with glowing eyes and heightened colour upon some heroic deed, I could understand how he had obtained an influence over a young, imaginative girl. He not only made her believe him to be endowed with the qualities of a hero, but honestly believed it himself; persuaded that he only lacked opportunity to prove that he was made of very different material from that of ordinary men.

I listened to Mr. Farrar politely, as I was bound to do, and not a little pitifully too. All this was what he had set his heart upon; and he would not live to have

his ambition gratified, even had Arthur Trafford been all that he was imagined to be. Had no one warned him? Did not the sight of his own pinched and drawn face warn him, that he was already on the threshold of the other life?

Had I been speculatively inclined just then, I might perhaps have carried on the thought which suggested itself to me. I will only say that I felt more respect for the etherealised body at that moment than for the earth-bound soul. I think now that Mr. Farrar would not be warned of what was approaching, and contrived to deceive his child and those about him, as he deceived himself respecting his real state.

There certainly was at present no foreshadowing of the coming separation in his daughter's face. She was altogether free from care; and I was presently very glad to find that my first estimate of her had been so far correct. She was not the kind of girl to be selfish in her happiness; even

in small things she showed herself to be considerate for others.

Mr. Farrar was presently wheeled away in his invalid chair, bidding me good-night with the information that he was just at the period of convalescence when rest and seclusion are essential ; and as soon as she found that I was left companionless in the drawing-room, she came in, her lover's protests, which were carried on to the very threshold, notwithstanding.

But I begged to be allowed to make acquaintance with the garden, and went out into the moonlight, leaving the lovers at the piano together. It was the very best light in which to see the Fairview grounds, where there were no trees higher than shrubs, and too much statuary, with vivid patches of colour, so fatiguing to the eye ; masses of flowers without scent or leaves, arranged with mathematical precision, as though they had become strong-minded, and would only speak to you in problems.

In fine, it was the newest fashion in gardening, which Mr. Farrar prided himself upon keeping up at great expense. To my unaccustomed eye, it lacked the poetry of the old, less formal styles. But it looked its best in the softening and subduing effect of moonlight ; one then got some hint of shadow, which was as lacking during most of the day as in the famous Elizabethan picture. And in the light of day the sylvan gods and goddesses looked specially uncomfortable, for want of a little foliage. One "startled nymph," placed at the corner of a gravel walk, without so much as a shrub near her, appealed to one's sense of justice in the most pathetic way.

My best enjoyment, as time went on, was to go down (the grounds sloped down a side of the hill upon which the house was built) through the kitchen-gardens, seat myself upon the low wall which bounded them, and, turning my back upon the glories of Fairview, refresh my eyes by gazing upon

the beautiful undulating country, stretching far into distance beyond. I never tired of gazing at the varied scene—pasturelands, deep woods, ripening hop and wheat fields, pretty homesteads, an occasional glimpse of the winding river, and a primitive looking little ivy-covered church. It was this little church that Lilian and I elected to attend, instead of going in state to the newly-built edifice near Fairview, to which Mr. Farrar had given large donations. There was one nest of a house, peeping out from its woody retreat, on the slope of a hill, rising from a small straggling village in a lonely valley, half a mile or so to the left of Fairview, which made a special appeal to my fancy—a long, low, old-fashioned house, with verandah and green terrace walk. I pictured to myself the lovely view as seen from that aspect, and what life might be with Philip in such a home—the rest and peace we two wanderers might find in such a haven as that. Had not I been a wan-

derer too? He was writing more and more hopefully of being able to return and settle in England in another year.

“Thank God, there will be no more need for money-grubbing, Mary. We can live with a few chosen friends and our books, in some cottage home, free from care.”

It was part of our arrangement to live simply as well as largely, our only ambition being to gather congenial friends about us. Ah, me—ah, Philip! what a glorious dream it was!

Lilian was very impatient to hear my praises of her lover—or to talk them; it did not much matter which—and that first evening she instituted a custom to come to my room the last thing every night. “If you do not mind, Miss Haddon?” in her sweet, pleading way. Mind, indeed! It would be the very best way of finishing the day which she could invent, I told her; taking her face between my hands, and putting my lips to her brow.

“ But, I fear you are engaged ; you must not let me be selfish,” she murmured, glancing at my open desk.

I had commenced a letter to Philip, telling him of my change of abode, and doing my best to convey to him the impression that my engagement at Fairview was a less business one than it really was. I closed my blotting-book at once. Philip would get his letter quite as soon if I wrote later ; and it was my fancy to write to him during the silent hours of the night.

She took a seat upon a stool at my feet, for that also was to be an institution, she laughingly observed. She commenced with a few words expressive of the hope that I should like Fairview ; and then, in charming Lilian fashion, told me that “ dear Arthur—(you must let me call him that to you when we are alone, dear Miss Haddon)—is delighted at my good fortune in having you. He sees, as we all do, how very different it might have been.”

She seemed to think that nothing could be more gratifying than to find favour in "Arthur's" sight. The possibility of his not finding favour in my sight did not, I think, for one moment enter her thoughts. Fortunately, she took my admiration of him for granted. I should have found it difficult to satisfy her expectations upon the point. How pleasant it was to listen to her ideal talk of her lover—her vivid imagination investing him with all the grandest attributes of a hero, though it would have been even more pleasant had I had no misgivings upon the point, or felt sure that she would never be disillusioned. As it was, the fear that she might some day be roughly awakened from her bright dream, and the knowledge of what such an awakening would cost her, caused me to listen rather gravely and abstractedly.

I was a little disturbed from another cause, not sufficiently appreciative of the

wisdom which comes with years. Ah, me ! how far apart that twelve years' difference between our ages seemed to set us ! I was so sensitive on the point that it did not occur to me that the difference between our characters or temperaments might in some measure account for my reticence. I was not naturally so expansive in my manner as are many women. Though the thought of Philip would set my pulses throbbing and my cheeks aflame, I could no more have talked of my love to Lilian Farrar than I could have cried it aloud in the streets. The rhapsodies over a certain portrait—the kisses pressed upon the paper that his hands would touch, and sundry other vagaries committed after she had left me that night ; could she have seen it all, she would no longer have thought it necessary to apologise for talking so much love talk to me. I was unreasonable enough to be wounded at her supposing it to be necessary to apologise ; whilst I took no

step to show her that no apology was needed. And the kisses and rhapsodies notwithstanding, the tone of the letter written that night to Philip was tinged with a *souppçon* of melancholy. It contained more than one reminder that he must not expect to find me exactly the same in appearance as the girl he had parted with eight years ago.

But I do not think mine is a morbid nature, apart from that one subject, and fortunately there were now too many demands upon me, and my time was too fully employed in the duties of my position, to leave leisure for unhealthy study of my feelings.

Mrs. Tipper at once left everything in the way of management to me ; only too glad to resign the reins of government, which had been but loosely held, into my hands, and to cease to have any recognised individuality in the household.

“ My dear, the servants all know that I

haven't been used to it, and I'm sure they are no way to blame for that : of course anybody could see, only they won't mind what I say."

Moreover, I received a hint from headquarters that it would be considered part of my duty to keep the domestic machinery under my supervision, the housekeeper with the high wages notwithstanding. The management of a set of servants who had been accustomed to do pretty much as they pleased, except with respect to their master—he was as exacting and ready to take affront as his sister was lax and good-natured—was, I soon found, no easy task. Lilian was simply the pet of the house, as she had been ever since her return home, seeing nothing the servants did not choose her to see, and with no thought of evil—no suspicions that others might be less trustworthy and unselfish than herself. Warm-hearted, sympathetic, and lavish with her large allowance of pocket-money, she was

ready to give wherever she was told help was needed, and was made acquainted with all the requirements of the servants and their relations. Grandmothers, mothers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles—numberless needy people were made known to her, and all found sympathy and help from her. The servants at Fairview had good cause for their fealty to their young mistress.

I was too often obliged to look upon the reverse of the picture. Many a trait of human nature, of which it is painful to be cognisant, and still more painful to be the censor came under my notice, and for a time my position was not a very enviable one, the servants resenting what I suppose appeared to them as undue interference. But, as time passed on, they learned to distinguish between my blame and their master's. They found that I blamed neither from pleasure nor anger, but simply because it was part of my business, which

it gave me no little pain to be obliged to do.

Then they could not say they found me either proud or ashamed of my position. Little half-speeches and innuendoes, with which I was first assailed, to the effect that "people who took wages had no right to set themselves up above other people who did the same," were met by the frank acknowledgment that they certainly had not a right. "Moreover, they soon saw that I assumed no airs of superiority, whilst trying my best to do the work I was paid to do." So at length we came to understand each other better; difficulties became fewer, and my work was less a task.

One step which I took, and which I quite believed would cause me to lose ground in the estimation of the servants, had quite a contrary effect from that I expected. I was very soon able, with dear old Mrs. Tipper's ready sanction, to give

Becky a step in life. An under-housemaid was required, and I contrived to win Mrs. Sowler's consent for Becky to come to Fairview. As I laid no restrictions whatever upon Becky in the matter, I thought it quite possible that certain facts concerning my poverty, and consequent rather hard life, whilst at Mrs. Sowler's, might become known amongst the servants at Fairview.

But I did not do Becky justice. As thoughtful and considerate for me as she was true, nothing relating to the past escaped her. Although she was at first awed and overwhelmed by the gorgeousness of her new home, and was, when alone with me, very frank in expressing her astonishment at the ease and readiness with which I accepted it all, I found that she said no word about my past troubles downstairs. She only displayed her surprise at my philosophy and delight at her own good

fortune, when we were safely shut in alone together.

“Ain’t it lovely, when you have been used to things so different, miss? Here’s me sitting down to dinner every day like a lady born! No call to snatch bits off the plates as they come down now! And instead of washing and doing my hair in the back scullery, there’s a beautiful bedroom of my own to go to. Mrs. Sowler wouldn’t believe! And I’ve got you to thank for it all! Just see if I won’t try. They shan’t say you have recommended a girl as can’t work, though Sophy says it isn’t genteel to tear at it as I do.

Becky’s gratitude to me was even deeper and more enduring than I had expected to find it, and her love—I must have been almost perfect to deserve such love as Becky’s, though I knew that it did her no harm to indulge it.

Lilian, who, from my description of past hardships, took great interest in her, and

was extremely kind to her, did not, as I took it for granted she would, share with me in Becky's love. Nay, I verily believe that, in her allegiance to me, poor Becky was jealous of a rival power. I could not get her to be enthusiastic about even Lilian's beauty. Becky always insisted that it was the pretty dresses which made her look more attractive than I did, and tried to persuade me to endeavour to outvie her. Her stanch friendship did me not a little good. It was especially cheering to me just now to find that I could keep love as well as win it without using any unlawful means.

CHAPTER VII.

VANQUISHED.

WE were living very quietly. Mr. Farrar was getting no nearer to convalescence, and all gaiety was still in abeyance. The few callers who made their appearance at Fairview were mostly new acquaintances, made since Lilian had returned home, and her father had commenced giving large entertainments; and their visits were very "few and far between." They were politely interested in Mr. Farrar's health; hoped his charming daughter would keep up her spirits; felt *quite* sure he was safe in Sir Clement's hands—Sir Clement was

always successful, and so forth ; then rustled smilingly away in their rich dresses ; no doubt with the pleasant consciousness of having done all that could be expected. We on our side could well have spared them that amount of labour. Dear old Mrs. Tipper was always depressed and conscious of her shortcomings after such visits ; and Lilian would nestle up closer to me, as though making a silent protest of her own against such friendship as they had to offer. In truth the greater part of those who came were merely rich ; and the two or three elderly ladies who were not unlike Mrs. Tipper, were too completely under the control of fashionable daughters to forget their grandeur and compare notes with her about past times, as they would have been only too glad to do. Mr. Farrar had passed his old friends on the road to wealth, and had not yet quite succeeded in overtaking more distinguished ones. The little his daughter had seen of their great

friends had not made her desire to see more.

"Arthur says, I shall enjoy being in society when once I get used to it; but—— Do you think I shall, dear Miss Haddon?"

"There must be some advantage in mixing with people, dear; but you know I have been as little accustomed to what is called society as you have."

"I sometimes think it is that which makes it so nice to be with you. You are so different from the people who come here, and so like those I knew in the dear old vicarage-life. You never say a thing merely because it is polite to say it."

"I hope I do not say things it is impolite to say, goosy," I smilingly replied. It was so pleasant to know that I found favour in her sight.

"I wish Arthur's sister were more like you, Mary" (hesitatingly and gravely). "She makes more loving speeches; she is always

saying that she longs for the time to come when we can be more together ; and yet we never seem to draw a bit nearer to each other ; sometimes I almost fear we never shall."

No ; they never would. I had seen quite enough of Mr. Trafford's sister to know that Lilian and she would always be far enough apart in spirit. Mrs. Chichester was a great favourite with, and in much request by, the world to which she belonged. "A young and attractive woman—a charming widow, who had been unfortunate in her marriage," said her friends. "A manœuvrer, who had married an old man for his money, and found too late that it was all settled upon his grown-up children by a former marriage," said others. She was called very sensitive, and good, and sweet. I only know that her sweetness and goodness was of a very different texture from Lilian's.

As I watched them together, Mrs.

Chichester, with her pretty vapid face, graceful languid air, and soft voice, uttering a string of ultra-affectionate speeches, and Lilian shyly responding in her own fashion with a low murmured word, a warm flush on her cheeks, or a little half-gesture, I think I rated them both at their true value.

Mrs. Chichester was the only lady who came to Fairview on intimate terms ; and she only came when she could make her escape, as she termed it, from a host of engagements. I had my suspicions that she did not find her "dearest Lilian" quite so congenial as she affirmed. There was a grave uncompromising truth about Lilian which I believe Mrs. Chichester found rather difficult to get on with for any length of time. In time I noticed something else ; Mrs. Chichester's visits were generally made on the days we expected Robert Wentworth.

For the first two or three times of our

meeting, she took great pains to cultivate me, declaring that she foresaw we were to become great friends. But after a while I appear to have ceased to interest her, although she was none the less sweet and pleasant to me on the occasions we had anything to say to each other. In truth, I believe that neither her brother nor she took very cordially to me, though both seemed to consider it necessary to keep up the appearance of doing so. Had they been more open about their sentiments, they would not have offended me. I had no right to expect more from them than I gave ; and I really gave very little.

Arthur Trafford might perhaps have been taken more into my favour than was his sister, but for his engagement to Lilian. As an every-day young man, with artistic tastes, there was nothing in him to positively object to. But such negative goodness was not, I told myself, sufficient for Lilian's husband. Her husband ought to

be able to appreciate her in quite a different way from that of Arthur Trafford. I am not sure that he even knew the best part of her.

I think the principal reason for his not taking to me was jealousy. Lilian was a little too much absorbed in her new friend to please him. With his sister it was different; and I was very much amused by her tactics. It requires little intelligence to defeat schemers, who generally plan on the supposition that some complicated machinery will be used to circumvent them, and who are thrown out in their calculations when one does nothing. Mrs. Chichester began to adopt the tone of being rather afraid of Miss Haddon, and some of her little speeches about my unapproachableness and so forth reached the ears they were not intended for.

“ If I did not see that you take to her so much, dearest, I should fancy her unsympathetic and cold—one of those natures one

never can feel at home with.—Oh yes,” in reply to an earnest protest from Lilian ; “good, of course ; extremely, I have no doubt ; but I am so enthusiastic in my friendships, and she quite chills me.”

It so happened that there was another hearer of this little speech besides myself. Our dinner-party had been enlarged that evening by the presence of Mr. Wentworth as well as Mrs. Chichester, and we had all dispersed afterwards, leaving Mr. Farrar and his sister in the drawing-room for their after-dinner rest. I had contrived to slip away from the others, and went down to my favourite seat on the low wall a little more readily than usual, turning my back upon Fairview.

As Mrs. Chichester’s speech sounded very close to me, I stood up. She would be able to see me across gooseberry and currant-bushes, and so be warned not to say more than she would like to do in my presence. But they had passed on, and were

already out of sight. I was sitting down again, when a voice by my side quietly asked :

“ Of whom were they speaking ?”

“ Mr. Wentworth !” I ejaculated in some surprise at his having found out my retreat. I thought no one penetrated beyond the kitchen gardens.

Robert Wentworth and I were becoming fast friends. The few times we had met at Fairview had been sufficient to show me that I had found a friend, and no ordinary one. Moreover, I had built up a little romance about him. Though I had so soon discovered the mistake I had made in supposing that he was engaged to Lilian, I believed that he loved her as only such men can love ; and while I heartily wished he held Arthur Trafford’s place in her heart, I felt all a woman’s sympathy for one whose hopes were wrecked, and who yet could bear himself so manfully. This had in the outset inclined me to make

friends with him more than any one else who visited Fairview. The more I knew of him, the more I found to respect.

As I have said, I was not without a suspicion that Mrs. Chichester regarded him with favourable eyes; and I will do her the justice to say that I believe she was in this instance false to her creed, and loved him for himself, though he was as yet said to be only a rising man.

"He had not worked and struggled in vain, thought one or two who had watched him with some interest; and there was now some chance of his succeeding at the bar."

"Of whom were they speaking?" he repeated. It was his habit always to get an answer.

"Of me. I think you must have guessed as much as that."

He laughed; sitting down by my side.

"Then why are you so philosophic about

it ? Do you think it is good to be cold and unsympathetic ?”

“ It may be good to be cold and unsympathetic—to *some* things.”

“ What things ?”

But I was not going to be drawn into a discussion in that direction. He was always trying to lead me into abstract talk, and sometimes I enjoyed taking a little flight with him ; but I reserved to myself the right of choosing the direction we should take.

“ What things ?”

I jestingly replied that I would leave him to determine what things.

“ You appear to very decidedly turn your back upon some things.”

“ I enjoy that view.”

He turned his eyes upon it for a moment.

“ It is pretty enough in its way.”

“ In its way, indeed !” Then I presently went on ; “ It is a way of quiet loveliness, which has a great charm for me in its suggestions of peace and rest. That house

amidst the trees by the hillside has a special attraction for me. Even you must allow it is a charming retreat."

"That low house? It is well enough; but—" turning his eyes upon my face, he added sharply: "What do you want with rest and peace and charming retreats? What right have you to be sighing for them?"

"Right? Surely every one has a right to them that can get them?"

"The right is only fairly won by working for it: and what have you done? I mean, of course, in comparison with what you have the power to do."

I suppose I looked my surprise. He went on more gravely:

"Pardon me, but I gave you credit for being one of the last to desire 'inglorious ease.' I believed that even your life here, with its many demands, is not quite enough for the exercise of your full strength.

Rest and peace are for the weak and vanquished."

"Then I suppose it is feeling weak and vanquished which makes me incline towards them."

"A little morbidness, more likely; the need of something to fight against. And yet," he added musingly, "there ought to be enough to exercise your energies here."

"There is enough to satisfy the most belligerent," I replied, laughing outright. "I assure you there is ample opportunity for the exercise of any power I may possess in that direction."

"And you acknowledge yourself vanquished?"

"Not by anything here, Mr. Wentworth."

"I beg your pardon;" gravely. Then, with the abruptness of friendship, he presently added: "Did Trafford give you the *Westminster*? The paper I marked ought to interest you."

"No; he forgot, I suppose."

"Oh, I see. I must be my own messenger next time, or—employ Becky. You showed some discrimination in giving her a step in life."

"Becky! Do you know her?"

"A little."

"Please do not be mysterious."

"I made her acquaintance when—
You do not think I was so inhuman as to let you go that day without keeping you in sight, in order to make sure you came to no harm. And—— Well, I did not feel quite sure about you, so kept about the place until I came upon Becky; and we two struck up a friendship."

"It was good of you."

"Was it? I am too much accustomed to analyse motives to be quite sure about that."

"And you have been in Becky's confidence all this time!" I murmured a little confusedly, with the consciousness of what that might mean.

"More than she imagines, perhaps; since she is no match for me in diplomacy. I need not tell you she is leal."

"No."

"How different the ring of those two voices!" he presently added, as the others again approached in the path running parallel with the wall upon which we were sitting, and on the other side of the kitchen garden, separating and screening us from observation, and across which came the voices of Mrs. Chichester and Lilian.

"I am glad that is evident to others as well as to me," I rejoined. "I like to think they are dissimilar in the least as well as the greatest points. Lilian will never become a woman of fashion."

"Not while what she typifies is out of date."

I knew that he meant the enthusiasm and romance—the delicate purity of her mind, which was so harmoniously typified

by her style of beauty. Then following out my thought, I absently added :

“ And you are his friend ?”

“ We were together at Eton and Oxford. Our families are distantly related ; and he, being four or five years my junior, was placed by his father in some degree under my charge, though we were in different sets.”

“ I can imagine that.”

“ He was a favourite at the University ; and—” as though searching about in his mind for some other good thing to say—“ his love for her is sincere.”

“ Yes ; thank God, it is that !”

“ Mr. Wentworth and Miss Haddon ! I had not the least idea of finding you here !” It was Mrs. Chichester speaking, with the prettiest air of surprise, as she emerged from the side-path, though the keen glance with which she measured the distance between him and me was not unobserved by one of us. “ What a de-

lightful retreat! May I join you?"—sitting down by my side with a graceful little addendum about feeling fatigued, and having found herself somewhat *de trop* with the lovers.

"And gentlemen are so very frank with sisters in such cases—are they not? Are you blest with brothers, Miss Haddon?" And so on, a list of questions which brought out the facts that I was not only lacking in brothers, but many other blessings.

"Quite alone in the great world, and an orphan. How very sad!"

Some way, whenever Mrs. Chichester attempted to talk sentiment, it was apt to degenerate into bathos; more perhaps from the contrast between her face and manner and what she said than from the words themselves.

"And past the age for charity schools, Mrs. Chichester," I smilingly replied.

"Oh, but indeed, indeed, you must not

think I meant anything of that kind!" Then, turning towards him in a pretty distressed way, she entreated him to help her to persuade me that she had really meant no harm. "I assure you I had not the slightest intention to give offence; do, pray, believe it, Miss Haddon."

Mrs. Chichester was always so terribly afraid of offending Miss Haddon, and so extremely and obviously cautious lest any words of hers should remind me of my position.

"Unfortunately the facts remain, however kind you may be about it, Mrs. Chichester," I gravely replied: "I *am* an orphan, and alone in the great world."

"And so completely defenceless—so weak, and easily vanquished," gravely put in Robert Wentworth.

"Ah, now you are laughing at me!" she ejaculated, an angry light in her eyes. "I expected more courtesy from *you*, Mr. Wentworth."

"I assure you I was only repeating

Miss Haddon's own sentiments, Mrs. Chichester."

This was too bad. I suppose he meant it as a punishment for my little exhibition of weakness. But I decided that the punishment was too great for the offence, so quietly took up the glove and bided my time.

Mrs. Chichester diverged into other topics. Dear Lilian, so sweet and good and trusting; so entirely unsuspicious of people, and so forth; to which we could easily assent. But I was not sufficiently enthusiastic upon the subject to please Mrs. Chichester, it seemed; and she took great pains to assure me that she did not in the least degree exaggerate dear Lilian's perfections. But though he gravely assured me that she did not, and even went as far as to hope that in time I should become as fully alive to Miss Farrar's good qualities, I was not to be piqued into giving warmer expression to my

feelings. I only gave him a smile for a reply.

Then I did what I believe was more satisfactory than words to Mrs. Chichester: rose and walked away, altogether unheeding Robert Wentworth's almost pleading protest.

"The moon is just rising, Miss Haddon, and the view will be at its best presently."

But I chose to punish him for his bit of treachery, and walked off, reminding them that it still wanted half-an-hour to teatime. When the half-hour had expired, they re-entered the drawing-room, where I was sitting in pleasant communion with Mrs. Tipper, both looking rather grave, not to say out of humour.

"Do you always avenge yourself in that crushing way, Miss Haddon?" he asked, coming to my side for a moment.

"I always defend myself in the best way I can when it comes to blows, Mr. Wentworth," I gravely replied.

"And this is the young lady who fears being weak and vanquished!"

"Not with such weapons as have been used to-night, Mr. Wentworth."

"Well, do not talk any more about wanting rest and peace after showing how much you enjoy planting a home-thrust as you have done."

"We were talking of a very different war and very different peace to this."

"I suppose we were; and in that case it is for me to cry *peccavi*."

"Yes."

"Well, I will think about it. One should never do that on impulse. Mean-time, good-night."

I gave him my hand with a smile. He took leave of the others, and went out.

Mrs. Chichester seemed to have lost her self-control a little. She certainly found it difficult to be quite as sweet and gracious to me as usual that night. I believe, too, she had tried her influence

upon Lilian with respect to me, for the latter was more than usually tender and loving when she came to my room that night for our little *tête-à-tête*. There was just the difference which might be expected in one of her nature after hearing anything against a friend.

"I love you, dear Mary; I love you. You must let me say it to-night."

"Why to-night of all nights in the year?" I smilingly rejoined.

"Because it does me real good to say it —because I must."

"And it does me real good to hear you say it, Dear Lilian, do not you see how precious your love is to me?"

I suppose that there was something in the tone which satisfied her. The shadow passed from her face, and she looked her bright happy self as she began to talk "Arthur" again. She had long since divined that such talk did not fatigue me.

"I really believe you must have a love-

story of your own locked away somewhere, or you would never be able to listen so patiently to me as you do," she laughingly ejaculated, intuitively lighting upon the true reason for my sympathy, one evening when she had been more effusive on the subject than usual. "Ah, now I am sure of it!" she added, her quick eyes, I suppose, detecting a consciousness in mine. "And, O, Mary, when shall I be thought worthy to hear it?"

"As though you were not that now! Dear Lilian, I should like you to know—of course you shall know and yet I think I must ask you to allow me to defer the telling of it a little longer."

"Of course I will. But I really think I can guess—a little. If I am only right, how delightful it will be?"

Had I allowed her to go on—had I listened and explained, instead of shrinking nervously away from the subject, would it have altered the future? I was still

shy and reserved about unlocking my treasure, even for Lilian's eyes. I have acknowledged my morbid weakness upon the point and it did not decrease. But I very soon had something besides myself to think about.

CHAPTER VIII.

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

MR. FARRAR grew suddenly and rapidly worse ; and the doctors, hastily summoned, saw that it was necessary to be frank and explicit with Mrs. Tipper and me as to his true state. His disease was approaching a fatal point, and his time was very short, they affirmed. Before we had time to prepare Lilian for the shock, the fiat went forth that the end might be expected in a few hours. Poor Mrs. Tipper shut herself up with her grief ; and to me was deputed the painful task of making the truth known to his child. She was at first completely

overwhelmed. That his state was a critical one she had not had the slightest suspicion. She had got accustomed to his invalid ways; and, hearing nothing to the contrary, had taken it for granted that he was surely if slowly progressing towards convalescence, persuading herself that at the very worst he would go on in the same way for years.

I think that Mrs. Tipper, and even he himself, was deceived in the same way.

I quietly tended Lilian through the first agony of her grief; but did not let it subside into despair, making an appeal (which I felt to be most effectual with one of her nature) to her unselfishness.

Her father needed her love more than he had ever yet needed it, and tears and grief must be kept back so long as it was in her power to comfort and sustain him. She responded at once. Choking back her sobs, and bathing her face to efface as much as possible the outward signs of her misery,

she presently whispered that I might trust her now.

“Only you must promise not to leave me—promise to keep near me, Mary?”

“I will, Lilian, if there be no objection made to my doing so.”

At first it seemed as if no objection would be made. When Lilian was ushered, awe-struck and silent, into the darkened room, where the spirit was already struggling to free itself from the weakened body, I saw the dying man’s eyes turn upon us with a faint gleam of satisfaction ; and I was about to follow her to his bedside, the nurse’s warning looks telling me that my assistance would soon be required, when the latter beckoned me towards her, where she stood just outside the door.

“Something on his mind, miss ; can’t die till it is told,” whispered the woman, as she made a gesture for me to close the door and leave the father and child together alone.

I was not a little startled ; but stood hesitating on the threshold of the room a moment, not quite liking to leave Lilian alone, inexperienced as she was, with the dying man, yet still more averse to be present at any family revelations, when, in reply, I suppose, to some whispered question from him, Lilian said :

“ Only the nurse and Miss Haddon, dear papa.”

“ You have taken to her—and she likes you, I think—she may be able to help you,” slowly and brokenly said Mr. Farrar. “ Yes ; send the other away. Only Miss Haddon and yourself.”

I hesitated no longer. Telling the nurse to remain in the adjoining room, I re-entered, and, carefully closing the door, advanced towards Lilian, on her knees by the bedside, with her face hidden upon the hand she held. I put my arm round her, and said with quiet distinctness, for I saw that there was no time to be lost in words :

"If Lilian needs a friend, you may trust me, Mr. Farrar, for I love her."

His fast glazing eyes rested upon me for a moment, as he murmured :

"Haddon of Haddon;" and then his gaze and his thoughts wandered away again.

"Is there anything you wish to have done, Mr. Farrar?" I presently asked, fancying that he was trying to concentrate his mind upon something, and found an increasing difficulty in so doing.

"Send for—Markham—bring the draft of——"

"Your will?" I asked, rapidly connecting the name, which I knew to be that of his lawyer, with the word "draft," and hoping that I thus followed out his meaning.

"Yes—will. Haddon of Haddon." Even at that moment, I saw he attributed my power of catching his meaning to be a consequence of my being a Haddon of Haddon.

"I will send at once, Mr. Farrar." I went to the door, told the nurse to bring the butler to me without a moment's delay, and waited outside until he came.

"Is my poor master——?"

"Do not speak, except to answer a question, please, Saunders; but listen carefully. Do you know the address of Mr. Farrar's solicitor, of both his private residence and the office?"

"Yes, miss."

"If you cannot ride, send a groom to the railway-station without a moment's delay; and telegraph to Mr. Markham, at both his residence and the office, these words: 'Mr. Farrar is dying; come at once, and bring the draft of the will.' Please repeat it."

He repeated the words; and then with an answering nod to my one word, "Immediately," went off to do my bidding.

I turned into the room again, closing the door. I had obeyed Mr. Farrar promptly

and literally, as at such a crisis it seemed best to do ; but I could not see the importance of the proceeding. Lilian was his only child, and would not suffer any pecuniary loss even if there were no will. But one thing struck me, even at that moment : it was singular that a business man like Mr. Farrar should have delayed making a will until now. And why did he appear so troubled and restless ? Why did he look anywhere but into his child's eyes, raised so tenderly and lovingly to his ?

“ Dear papa, speak to me—look at me ! ” she pleaded.

“ Eighty thousand, and business worth ——— ”

“ O papa, darling ; one little word to your child. I'm Lilian, papa.”

“ Keys—cabinet—Haddon of Haddon.”

I followed the direction of his eyes, went softly and quickly to the dressing-table, brought from it several bunches of keys,

ranged them separately on the counterpane before him, and pointed to each, watching his eyes for the answer.

“This ! And now which key ?” I held each key up, and slowly passed it over the ring until his eyes told me that I had come upon the right one ; then again following the direction of his eyes I went towards a cabinet, which stood between the windows opposite his bed, and unlocked it. It opened with doors, upon a nest of drawers ; and I pointed to each, going slowly down one side and up to the other until I had found the right one. It contained a small sealed and addressed packet and a bundle of letters. I held up the letters first.

“Burn !”

“I will burn them, Mr. Farrar.”

“Burn !”

I saw that it must be done at once ; put them into the fender, struck a match, and set light to them, stirring them well about until they were only tinder. For a sus-

picion had crossed my mind that it was quite possible there might be something connected with Mr. Farrar's past life, the evidence of which it was desirable to keep from his daughter's knowledge. At any rate, he had a right to have his letters destroyed if he so wished it, and his mind was manifestly relieved by its being done.

"Parcel!"

I brought the little packet to his bedside.

"Do you wish anything to be done with this, Mr. Farrar?"

He looked at it a moment, and then turned his eyes upon his child.

"Forgive—be good to her."

"To whom, dear papa?" murmured Lilian.

"Sister."

"Auntie! Dear papa, do not you know that I love her?" she sobbed out.

"Haddon of Haddon—send it."

"Send this packet to the person to whom

it is addressed, Mr. Farrar?" I asked, beginning to find a clue to the mystery, as I solemnly added, "I will." So far I had interpreted his meaning, but I presently saw that was not sufficient. The eyes wandering from Lilian to the packet, and from the packet to me, told that there was still something to be done before his mind would be set at rest. I looked at the two or three lines in his own handwriting on the packet, and, after a moment's hesitation, said, "This is addressed to your daughter, Marian; and I think you wish Lilian to promise to be good to her sister, Mr. Farrar?" I saw I had hit upon his meaning once more.

"Yes; good to her."

"Sister!" ejaculated Lilian. "Have I a sister, dear papa—living?"

He lay unconscious a few moments, murmuring something about "mountains and peat-smoke and a cottage home," dwelling apparently upon some familiar scenes of the

past. But the thought presently grew as wandering and disjointed as the words, and the light was gradually fading out of the eyes. I now watched him with grave anxiety, all my fears aroused lest there should be some very serious necessity for making a will after all.

It was a momentary relief when the door opened and the doctor entered the room. But my hopes very quickly faded when I saw him stand inactive, looking gravely down at his patient's face, and then, with a pitiful look at Lilian's bowed head, and an expressive glance at me, turn quietly away. I followed him out of the room.

"Will he rally again, do you think, Dr. Wheeler, sufficiently to be able to sign a will?"

He stopped in the act of putting on his gloves, turning his eyes upon me in some surprise.

"A will! Surely a man of business habits like Mr. Farrar has done that long

ago. He has been quite sufficiently warned to be aware of his danger, Miss Haddon. But"—after a pause—"it cannot be of very vital importance. There is but one child, and of course she takes all; though I should have given him credit for tying it securely up to her, in the event of her falling into bad hands."

"The lawyer has his instructions, I believe, Dr. Wheeler, and we have telegraphed for him to come at once. Meantime, can anything be done? Is there no stimulant, no——?"

"My dear lady, Mr. Farrar is dead already, so far as the capability of transacting business is concerned. It is the insensibility preceding death; and only a question of an hour or so—it may be only of minutes."

Sick at heart, I silently bowed, and turned back into the room again, waiting in solemn stillness until Lilian should need me. The nurse moved softly in and out

the room, and I knew why she drew up the blinds to let the last rays of sunlight stream in. The glorious sunset faded into twilight, the twilight deepened into night, and then, with a long quivering sigh, the spirit stole forth to that other life.

The moment all was over there were innumerable demands upon my energies. Taking my dear Lilian to her aunt's room I left them together, after giving a private hint to each that it was necessary to stifle her grief as much as possible for the sake of the other. Then I went downstairs again to give the awe-struck and confused servants the necessary orders which, in their first grief, neither Lilian nor her aunt was capable of giving. They had deputed me to see that all was rightly done.

But the demands upon me increased so rapidly that I quite felt relieved when a servant came to tell me that the lawyer had arrived. I went at once to the library, too

much absorbed in the one thought to remember that I was meeting a stranger.

"Too late, I am sorry to find, madam!" said a short, stout, brisk-looking little man making me a low bow as I entered. He evidently found it somewhat difficult to get the right expression into his jovial face, as he went on to explain that he had been dining out when the telegram, sent on by his wife, reached him. "I lost not a moment, and have managed to get from Russell Square in an hour and a-half." Then, after a keen glance at me, which took in my left hand, he added: "A relative of my late client's, I presume?"

"No; my name is Haddon. I have been living here as companion to his daughter, Mr. Markham, and have always been treated as a friend of the family." I said the last words in the hope of inducing him to trust me sufficiently to say anything he might have to say, forgetting that I was talking to a lawyer.

“Very fortunate for Miss Farrar : friends are needed at such times as this ;” eyeing me sharply as he went on to add a few conventional words respecting his client’s death, and the shock its suddenness must have given his friends ; and so affording me an opportunity for the indulgence of a little sentiment.

But I neither felt any nor desired him to think that I did, upon the score of my attachment to Mr. Farrar ; so quietly replied : “Death is always solemn, Mr. Markham ; but I know too little of Mr. Farrar to mourn him as a friend. His daughter, I love.”

He nodded pleasantly ; satisfied, I think, so far ; then, after a moment or two, tried another leading question.

“You were probably present with her at the last ?”

“Yes.”

“Conscious ?”

“Yes, until the last hour.”

“And you are aware I was summoned, I presume?”

“I sent for you, Mr. Markham.” He waited; and seeing he was still cautious, I went on: “It was Mr. Farrar’s wish you should be sent for. He appeared extremely anxious to sign the will; but it was too late.”

“Ah, yes; too late! Very sad, very sad;” watching me furtively, as he carefully measured the length and breadth of one of his gloves. “And no last instructions, I suppose; no little confidences or revelations, or anything of that kind?”

I quite understood him; and after a few moments’ reflection replied, “Yes; there was a revelation, Mr. Markham—a very startling one; and as you prepared the will, you doubtlessly know to what I allude?”

I waited a few moments for a reply, but waited in vain. He seemed lost in contemplation of his gloves again. This jovial-

looking little man was not quite so effusive as he looked. I tried once more.

"It is unfortunate the will was not signed since Mr. Farrar so much desired it."

"Certainly; much to be regretted—very much."

I saw that the approach was to be made from my side; and, as it had to be done sooner or later, I said: "But I do not see that's its not being signed can make any difference to Miss Farrar, from a pecuniary point of view."

"No; none whatever. Miss Farrar will not be a loser."

"Will her sister?"

"Ah! now we shall understand each other, now you have come to the point, my dear lady," he replied, with brisk cheerfulness, placing a chair for me, and seating himself before me with a confidential air, a hand upon each of his knees. "You see it was necessary to bring you to that; though you have fenced very well—very neatly

indeed—for a lady. I could not desire a better witness in a case, I assure you—on my own side.”

I was not quite so charmed with the compliment as he intended me to be; not taking very kindly to the idea of being “brought to it,” as he termed it. So I replied with an air which I flattered myself was as *dégagé* as his own: “I thought it as well to tell you that much, Mr. Markham.”

“Quite as well, my dear young lady; saving of time, you know. I may now tell you that the person to whom you allude will be a considerable loser by the will I have brought down with me not being signed.”

“Is there no previous will, Mr. Markham?”

“There have been several others, But Mr. Farrar was a very careful man, and always destroyed an old will when he made a fresh one. He could never quite satisfy himself as to the exact provision to be

made for the—person you have named, and was continually altering his mind, making the sum now greater now smaller.”

“Fortunately, Miss Farrar may be trusted to do all that is right.”

“No doubt a very sweet and good young lady; brought up with relations on the mother’s side, I understand. I have had the pleasure of meeting her two or three times, and was much struck with her amiability.”

“It is something stronger and better than amiability, Mr. Markham,” I returned. Someway that word always offended me with reference to Lilian.

“I am glad to hear it, though amiability has its attractions—*for me*.” After a few moments’ contemplative glance at me, he added: “It will be some comfort to her, by-and-by perhaps, to know that the other is at least three or four years older than herself, and that the mother died whilst her child was young.”

I understood what he meant; "the other," as he termed her—he did not once allude to her by name—had been born before Mr. Farrar's marriage to Lilian's mother.

"Thank you for telling me that, Mr. Markham; it will be a comfort to Lilian."

He nodded and smiled, as though to say I deserved that little encouragement for acquitting myself so well; then became grave and business-like again, as befitted the occasion. Rising from his seat and taking the little black bag which he had brought with him, from the table, he said: "You will require no aid from me until after the funeral, when Miss Farrar will have to go through a little legal formality. There will be no complications; everything will be Miss Farrar's absolutely. A trifle *too* absolutely, I should be inclined to say, if she were an ordinary young lady, or likely to fall into bad hands—a money-hunting husband's, for instance."

"You know, of course, that Miss Farrar is engaged to be married to Mr. Trafford, Mr. Markham!"

"One of the Warwickshire Traffords?" he returned with a smile, which was instantly suppressed. "Yes; I have heard something of the kind, certainly."

He certainly had; since, as I afterwards ascertained, the will had been so made as to very securely protect Lilian's property in the event of such marriage. Then, in reply to a question of mine, he advised me to send to one of the best undertakers (giving me the names and addresses of two or three, but cautiously abstaining from recommending one more than another), and make him responsible for everything being conducted in a fit and proper manner. "That is, I think, the wisest course to pursue; though you are free to carry out Miss Farrar's wishes in any way."

"Thank you."

"Do not name it. I hope to have the

pleasure of meeting you again upon a less solemn occasion, Miss Haddon." Then looking at his watch, he found that he would have just time to catch the ten o'clock up-train ; and, declining my offer of refreshments, he bade me good night, and hurried out to the fly which he had kept waiting for him.

CHAPTER IX.

ARTHUR TRAFFORD'S CHIVALRY.

WHEN the first hurry and excitement was over, I found that the duties I had to perform were anything but arduous in a house like Mr. Farrar's. I had only to see the genteel solemn undertaker, and give him a *carte blanche* to furnish the best—out of respect for what I knew would be Mr. Farrar's wishes, I did not add, “and the plainest”—as it is becoming good taste to do. It was equally easy to arrange with the milliners and dressmakers, etc. They all seemed to know precisely what the size of the house required, and assured me in a

few hushed words that everything should be in the best taste, and the servants' mourning all that was proper for such an occasion ; every shade of difference in position being duly considered. Moreover, the question of my own mourning, which had somewhat puzzled me, was settled upon at once, in a way which would have not a little amused me had the occasion been a different one. "Friend staying in the house—chaperon of Miss Farrar's—everything would be found quite correct."

During the next few days Lilian did not allude to the revelation made by her dying father. I believe she was for the time too much absorbed in grief to be able to realise anything beyond the one fact that she had lost him. Mr. Farrar had been a loving, indulgent father ; and though for the first fifteen years of her life she had seen very little of him, that little had shown her all that was best in his nature, and given her faith in him.

On coming to live at the great palace he had built, she found herself treated like a princess in a fairy tale, surrounded with luxury, the richest gifts showered upon her, a host of attendants ready to obey her slightest whim, and, above all, the orthodox Prince Charming to lay his heart at her feet. It was natural enough that her grief should be strong for the loss of the father to whom she owed all this, as well as a love which was itself stronger and deeper than is lavished upon all daughters.

I did not attempt any commonplaces in the way of condolence ; just in a quiet, undemonstrative way made her feel that a friend was near, and trusted to the first terrible anguish wearing itself out. With poor Mrs. Tipper it was different, though I knew her grief was in its way just as genuine as Lilian's. I saw that it did her real good to moan and cry, and talk over her brother's goodness, generosity, wonderful cleverness, and so forth ; and fully in-

dulged her when she and I were alone. I am glad to believe that I was of some service to both in the time of need.

Mr. Farrar had no immediate relations to be bidden to the funeral. Mrs. Tipper hesitatingly mentioned something about a cousin in the "green-grocery line;" but presently opined that perhaps "dear Jacob" might object; and he was dropped out of notice. Major Maitland, Lilian's uncle on her mother's side, who promised to attend "if possible," Arthur Trafford, Robert Wentworth, and the doctor, and lawyer, were to be the followers at the funeral.

I saw more of Arthur Trafford during that week of seclusion than I had previously done, and I was more than ever dissatisfied with him. For the first few days Lilian kept her room, almost prostrate from the shock which had come upon her at a time when she was so entirely unprepared. I think, too, that it would have appeared to her almost like irreverence for the dead

to listen to love-speeches just then. Nevertheless, she might have been expected to turn to him for comfort, and I thought it significant that she did not do so. I acted as messenger between them ; and even if I had had a very high opinion of Arthur Trafford before, I should have lost it now. The one only thing I could see in him to respect was his love for Lilian. It was not his lack of love for her, but his too evident love for something else, which offended me. It might be that I was not marked "dangerous" in his estimation now that circumstances were altered, and that therefore he was more unguarded with me. I can only say he appeared to very great disadvantage under the new aspect of affairs. In our first interview after Mr. Farrar's death, I saw that he was thinking a great deal more of the large fortune which would revert to Lilian than anything besides.

"So I hear there is no will, Miss Haddon?"

"You have made inquiries already, then I" was my mental comment. I knew that the fact was not public property yet, and that he must have taken some pains to find it out.

"I believe not, Mr. Trafford," I coldly returned.

But my coldness was not of the slightest importance. He was too much absorbed in the one thought to notice my manner of speaking.

"And Lilian inherits without restrictions of any kind. Just the kind of man to have made all sorts of unpleasant complications—meant to do it, too—and now my darling is unfettered!"

And in his gratification he so far forgot the *convenances* as to whistle softly to himself, whilst he carefully readjusted one of Nasmyth's little gems, which hung slightly aslant upon the wall.

"She says she knows how much you are sympathising with her just now, Mr. Trafford."

He coloured to his temples as he replied :

“Of course I am, Miss Haddon. It’s— it’s a great loss, make the best of it, to an only child ; and it came upon her so suddenly, poor girl.” Adding, a little consciously (I daresay it was not pleasant to have me silently eyeing him as I was doing), “Tell her, please, that I am longing to do what I may to comfort her—beg her, for my sake, to keep up. It will never do to let her get low and desponding, you know. Hers is a nature of the tendril kind—so entirely dependent upon those she loves.”

“I do not think so, Mr. Trafford ; and I do not think that those she loves will find it so. At any rate, she does not give *me* the idea of being weak.”

“I meant only the kind of delicacy which accompanies refinement, and which is so charming in a woman, Miss Haddon,” adding a little more pointedly than was necessary, I thought : “such fragility as arouses the chivalry of men.”

"As the chivalry is dying out, I must hope that the exciting cause is getting scarcer, Mr. Trafford."

We eyed each other a moment, and then tacitly agreed for an armed truce. I left him, and went to Lilian's room with lagging steps and a heavy heart.

"Arthur feels it terribly," she said, lifting her eyes to mine as I entered the room, fortunately for me, taking it as a matter of course that he did. "Dear papa was so good to him."

"He hopes you will bear up for his sake, dear Lilian."

"I will, indeed I will. Tell him he shall not find me selfish by-and-by."

Still no allusion to the one subject which was engrossing all my thoughts. It was not until the evening after the funeral that she approached it, and then she waited until she and I were alone before doing so.

Flushing painfully, and with downcast eyes, she hesitatingly began :

“Have you been thinking of—of what dear papa told us—that night, Mary?”

“Yes, dear, I have ; a great deal.”

“I am so thankful that you and you only were present.”

She paused a few moments, and I tried to help her.

“I think that there is no doubt—you have a sister, and that the packet, which I have taken care of, is intended for her, Lilian.”

Taking it from my desk, I showed her the words on it in her father’s handwriting : “Quarter’s allowance due 24th for Marian ;” with an address, “Mrs. Pratt, Green Street, Islington.”

“Marian ! Yes, that was the name,” she murmured.

“I have since found out that she was born three or four years before Mr. Farrar was married to your mother, Lilian.”

A bright hope sprang to her eyes.

"Perhaps he was married before, Mary?"

"I do not think that is likely, or it would be known. But I know you will none the less do what is just and right."

"I shall *all the more* do what is right—I owe her so much more. If wrong has been done, it is for me to make what reparation I can. And—Mary, try to always remember how anxious he was to——" She broke down; an expression in her face which shewed how deep was the wound which her loving, sensitive nature had received. Her grief was so much the harder to bear, for the knowledge that her dead was less perfect than she had believed him to be. She was already obliged to plead for him.

I knew that fragile as she looked, and tender and yielding as she had hitherto seemed, it arose more from humility at finding herself blessed as ordinary mortals rarely are, than from any lack of strength. We had

not seen the best of Lilian Farrar yet. Least of all, did her lover know her. Already I could have given a better reason for loving her than he could have done.

She was musing over the address.

"Mrs. Pratt, Green Street, Islington."

"Is that where—my sister is staying, do you think, Mary? Would it not be better to go there?"

"Would you like me to go for you, Lilian?"

For a moment she looked not a little relieved by the suggestion; but after a little reflection, appeared to put the temptation to avail herself of it, aside.

"Not if I ought to go myself. Do you think that I ought to do so, Mary?"

I replied with a question:

"What do you intend to do when you have found Marian" (sister did not come readily to my lips, and I used the name instead), "dear Lilian?"

"Ask her to come to live here, and do

all I can to make up for the wrong done to her mother"—in a low, but clear and decided tone.

Even at that moment, with her grief so fresh upon her, though it cost her a sharp agony to use the word, she called it a "wrong." But although my sympathies were entirely with her, I thought it right to remind her of one thing.

"There is the possibility that she may not be the kind of companion you would desire to have always with you, Lilian."

"I want to do right, Mary," she replied, putting my little attempt at sophistry aside.

I nevertheless made one more little feeble protest on the side of expediency.

"There are your aunt and Mr. Trafford also to be considered, you know."

"I want to do what is right," she repeated. In her faith and inexperience, she had no misgivings as to their concurrence in all that was right; or if she had

doubts with regard to one, she would not allow so much to herself.

"Therefore I think you ought not to make up your mind too decidedly as to what it will be right to do, until you have seen her—then perhaps you might trust to your instincts."

"And, Mary," she said, a little consciously, "I think I would rather not name it to any one but you, until everything is settled. We can explain to auntie and Arthur afterwards, you know."

I believed that auntie was included to make it appear less personal. She would not have hesitated a moment about taking the dear little lady into her confidence; but she *did* hesitate about telling her lover, until it would be too late to undo what was done, though she would not acknowledge so much.

"Very well, dear; we will go together as soon as you feel quite equal to it. We might go up to town by the twelve o'clock

train some morning, and take a cab from the terminus to Islington."

"I am equal to it now, Mary ; and I shall not rest until we have been."

I saw that nothing would be gained by delay—her anxiety would only increase, and therefore promptly acceded.

"Shall we say to-morrow, Lilian?"

"Yes, please."

I quietly made the necessary arrangements ; and just before we were setting forth, told Mrs. Tipper that Lilian and I were going to town upon business, and that we would tell her all about it on our return. She was very easily satisfied ; falling in with my opinion that it could do Lilian no harm, and might do her good, to be obliged to take some interest in the outside world ; too single-minded to suspect more than the words told her. Single-minded ! The rarest and best quality I have known during my checkered life—the one quality above all others which

I have learned to respect, is single-mindedness. It may not always accompany large intellect, though I believe the very largest is never without it, and it is rather looked down upon by the world in general. Single-minded people are proverbially the butts of the Talleyrands of society; though the latter are more frequently baffled by them than they are willing to allow.

I saw what the effort cost Lilian—how painfully she shrank from doing what she nevertheless would not allow herself to depute another to do—as she sat with me white and still in the railway carriage. It did me real good to see her rise to the occasion in this way; and it bore out my previously formed opinion of her capability. I was also glad to feel that I was of some little use to her. Respecting the result of our errand I was not so much at ease. What was this sister? Would she be found worthy the devotion and self-sacrifice of such as Lilian? and if not, would it be

given the latter to see that it would be unwise to bring her to Fairview? Until I saw the sister, I would make no attempt to bias Lilian's judgment, trusting more to her instinct than my own wisdom in the matter. Moreover, although I knew that Mrs. Tipper would easily enough be brought to see that right was right, I was by no means so sure that Arthur Trafford would be found equally amenable. Even should he approve of Lilian's recognition of a strange sister, he was not at all likely to approve of her being brought to reside at Fairview. I knew that he meant to press for an early marriage; and I knew that he was not the man to take kindly to the idea of a stranger living with them, whatever her claims might be. But I kept my doubts and fears to myself; preserving a calm face for Lilian's eyes. More than once the thought crossed my mind that the daughter he had only designated as "Marian" might be married, and was in

fact the Mrs. Pratt to whom the address on the packet referred. In such case, it would be easy enough to do right without bringing about any unpleasant complications. The address seemed, I fancied, to indicate a poor neighbourhood; and if "Marian" should prove to be the wife of a struggling man, a portion of Mr. Farrar's wealth could not be better employed than in giving him some assistance.

CHAPTER X.

MARIAN.

As I had expected, the neighbourhood through which we were driven did not appear to be inhabited by the most prosperous class of people. We presently found ourselves in Green Street; and when the cabman drew up before a retail shoemaker's shop, we saw at once that there could be no doubt about its being the place we wanted. The name of Pratt ran up and down, and across the house, in every direction, backwards and forwards, and sideways and lengthways; to say nothing of a large blue boot swinging over the pavement, conveying the information that this was the

veritable Pratt's, and there was no other in the three kingdoms who sold boots and shoes so good and cheap, and beautiful to behold, as did Jonathan Pratt. Telling the cabman to wait, I entered a sort of bower of boots and shoes (they hung all round the doorway, and were ticketed "Great Bargains," "Alarming Sacrifices," "The Princesses' Favourite," and so forth), closely followed by Lilian.

"I'll attend to you in half a moment, ladies," said a stout, brisk, good-tempered-looking man, as he put some small shoes into a parcel, and counted out the change to a customer at the counter, adding to her: "You've got the best of me again, Mrs. Gooch, by a good threepence, that you have! There, take 'em away quick, before I change my mind!"

"Oh, you always say that, Mr. Pratt," laughed the good woman, gathering up her parcel and change, and pleasantly wishing him good-day.

Evidently Mr. Pratt was a favourite with his customers. I afterwards heard that he was famous for his jokes and good-nature, as well as for a keen eye to business.

"Now, ladies," he went on, turning smilingly towards us, as the good woman left the shop, and rubbing his hands briskly together; "here I am ready to go through it all again, though you ladies always get the best of me in a bargain, you know you do. Eh"—— Falling back a little as Lilian put up her veil; and even in that somewhat obscured light seeing that she was very different from the generality of "ladies" he had to deal with, he added: "I beg your pardon, miss, I'm sure. What may I have the pleasure of showing you?" For Mr. Pratt prided himself upon his ability to suit his manners to his customers.

"You are Mr. Pratt?" she began hesitatingly.

"Yes, miss; that's me for certain."

Lilian looked towards me, and I said :

“ Will you allow us to speak with Mrs. Pratt? Our business is with her, if she will kindly see us for a few minutes.”

“ Mrs. Pratt! *To* be sure, ladies; *to* be sure. Please to step this way.” We followed him into a small back-shop; and after putting two chairs for us, and—I suppose from force of habit—placing two little squares of carpet at our feet, he opened a side-door, and called out: “ Mother, you’re wanted.”

Lilian, who looked very white and agitated, slipped her hand into mine; I clasped it firmly, waiting not a little anxiously for her sake.

A slight little woman, with a gentle good face, and soft dark eyes, looking very neat in a clean lilac-print gown and large white apron, came hesitatingly into the room. One glance at her shewed us that it was not she whom we were seeking. Though her slight figure made her perhaps appear

younger than she really was, she could not have been much less than fifty. We were for the moment both too much absorbed in the one thought to speak ; and after glancing timidly first towards her husband and then at us, she asked :

“ Is it change wanted, Jonathan ? ”

“ These ladies want to speak to you, Susan,” he replied, looking a little surprised at our silence.

Lilian flushed up, glancing pleadingly towards me again. It was certainly rather embarrassing. I was casting about in my mind to find some way of approaching the subject without committing ourselves, in the event of their not being in the secret, when fortunately Mr. Pratt’s attention was called towards the shop-door, where commenced a brisk patter of words with reference to some of the bargains. With this gentle-looking woman it would be much easier to say what we wanted to say than with her husband, more accustomed

to gauge the worth of words. So I plucked up my courage, and began :

“ We have come to you, Mrs. Pratt, in the hope of obtaining some information”— I suddenly thought of new tactics, and said: “ Is the name of Farrar known to you ?”

“ Farrar !” She put her hand to her side, and sank down on to the nearest chair, gazing at me without a word.

Seeing that I was at any rate so far correct as to be speaking to the right Mrs. Pratt, I went on :

“ Perhaps you know that Mr. Farrar has been ill for some time ?”

“ Yes, miss ; I know that.”

“ Do you also know that his illness terminated in death ten days ago ?” I said, speaking slowly, and carefully separating my words, in order to in some measure break the shock ; for though she was not the “ Marian ” we were seeking, her agitation shewed me that they were in some way connected.

“Dead !” she murmured—“dead !” as she sat gazing at us, or rather at some vision which the words seemed to have called up before her mental eyes.

I thought it best now to go straight to the point, and said :

“Before his death, Mr. Farrar expressed a wish that this packet should be delivered to the person to whom it is addressed ; and therefore we thought it best to bring it ourselves to you, Mrs. Pratt.”

She mechanically took it from my hand, looking down at it as though she were in a dream.

“But,” eagerly began Lilian, “you see it is written above, ‘For Marian ;’ and before he died, dear papa told me ——”

“You are Miss Farrar !” ejaculated Mrs. Pratt, turning towards Lilian with a strange expression in her eyes : a mixture of curiosity and shame and confusion, it appeared to me.

“Yes ; I am his daughter ; and very

anxious to obey his last request. He told me that I have a sister, and wished me to be good to her. He meant to provide for her, and his will was prepared ; but his illness was very sudden at—the last, and the lawyer did not arrive in time.”

I had thought it only just to tell Lilian what Mr. Markham said, and she eagerly caught at the idea that her father had intended to provide for the other.

Mrs. Pratt murmured something about its being very kind of Mr. Farrar ; her eyes downcast, and hands fluttering about her apron-strings.

“ We thought it best to bring this ourselves, Mrs. Pratt, because we wish to be in communication with Marian,” I said ; “ and of course you know where she is. You know her, do you not ? ”

“ Yes, miss,” replied Mrs. Pratt. She sat very pale and still a few moments, and then went on slowly and hesitatingly : “ If you really wish to see her ”——

Lilian very earnestly assured her that she did.

“Then will you please to come this way, ladies?” she whispered, still, I fancied, a little nervously and doubtfully.

We rose at once, and followed her into the passage, up a narrow staircase, and into a front-room on the first floor. One glance shewed me that this was very different from what might have been expected in Mrs. Pratt’s best room—different in the way of being very pretentious. It was in fact evidently intended to be considered a drawing-room and was crowded with tawdry finery, which not even its exquisite cleanliness could make to look respectable. Gaudy furniture, gaudy curtains, gaudy vases, with quantities of artificial flowers; a round table spread with gaudily bound books, etc.—all looking in such strange contrast with Mrs. Pratt herself in her homely simplicity.

“Will you tell us where to find my

sister?" eagerly began Lilian after a hasty glance around.

"Sister!" said Mrs. Pratt. "You are not ashamed to call her that; or—is it that you do not know?"

"I have guessed that—that her mother was to be pitied," said Lilian in a low voice, a crimson flush suffusing her face.

"And you can still call her sister?"

"Yes."

"God bless you, dear young lady! It's only the best and purest could say that. Let me—pray let me."

And before Lilian could prevent her, Mrs. Pratt sank on her knees and kissed the young girl's hands. It expressed all the more to me, because I judged that Mrs. Pratt was not naturally so emotional as most people. She recovered herself quickly too. After turning away for a few moments towards the window, where she stood wiping her eyes, she was the same self-contained, quiet-looking little woman we had first seen.

“Please forgive me, ladies; but, as you have guessed, I do know Marian Reed. Her poor mother was my only sister, and since her death, Marian has always lived with us. Mr. Farrar has always paid very handsome for her; and she has been brought up like a—lady.” Mrs Pratt hesitated a little over the word, and added: “I mean, compared with people like us—a deal better than my own little ones.”

To gain a little time for Lilian, I asked: “How many children have you, Mrs. Pratt?”

“We have seven, miss; but I’ve a good husband; a better man than Jonathan doesn’t breathe; and business is brisk: so we want for nothing.”

The latter part of her sentence was meant for a hint, I thought, and I was all the more favourably inclined towards her in consequence. At any rate we were amongst honest people.

"Is—Marian in the house now?" inquired Lilian. "May I see her?"

Once more I noticed the reluctance in Mrs. Pratt's face, as she replied: "Yes, miss; I'll go and tell her."

"No; please do not tell her; let me introduce myself."

Mrs. Pratt consented; and to be quite honest with us, did not leave the room. Standing at the open door, she called out: Miss Reed—Marian, dear!"

No reply.

"Marian, dear, will you please come down for a few minutes?"

"What for?" called out a voice from some upper chamber.

"Somebody wants to see you, dear."

I heard a word which seemed very much like "Bother!" and a sound as of a book thrown down. Then there was a somewhat heavy and leisurely tread descending the stairs.

"Well, what is it?"

A girl of about twenty or twenty-one years of age entered the room, looking as though she had been disturbed and resented it. At sight of her my heart sank, Lilian's sister ! This underbred girl, arrayed in the latest style of elegance as interpreted by Islington. Everything about her was in the extreme of penny-fashion-book style the largest of chignons, the fluffiest of curls covering her forehead down to her eyebrows, the longest of ribbons streaming down her back, and the latest inventions in the way of imitation jewellery. I am bound to acknowledge that she was in her way good-looking ; with plenty of dark hair, large round dark eyes, red (not pink) and white complexion, and good though large figure, and yet——could any one in the world be more disappointing, as Lilian's sister ?

She crossed the room, seated herself with a *déagé* air in a lounging-chair, and playing with a bunch of trinkets, it was then the fashion to call charms, upon her watch-

chain, she languidly inquired if we had come about the music lessons.

"Because I have almost made up my mind to engage a gentleman. I require something advanced, you know; and the gentleman who is organist at our church gives lessons to a select few, and'—"

"Are you Marian?" asked Lilian, white and trembling.

"I am Miss Reed," very stiffly returned that young lady.

"This young lady is Miss Farrar," I put in, to help Lilian.

"O indeed!" returned Miss Reed.

I saw that the name told her nothing. I know now that she had never been told her father's name.

With slowly gathering colour, Mrs. Pratt now came to my assistance. "Mr. Farrar was the gentleman who—paid for your schooling and all that, Marian, dear—the quarterly allowance came from him."

"And who was he?"

“Your father?” returned her aunt, in a low broken voice: “and these ladies have come to tell us that he has been ill, and—and——”

“He is dead!” said Marian; taking note of our black clothes, and becoming as pale as one of her complexion could become.

“Come!” I thought, not a little relieved, “she can feel.” But I very quickly found that I had been somewhat premature in giving her credit upon that account. It is possible to feel without the feeling being worth very much. I saw in what way she was touched, as she went on, with a little catch in her breath, looking from one to the other of us: “What has he left me?”

We were silent; and putting the right construction upon our silence, she hurriedly added: “You don’t mean to say he hasn’t left me anything, after——”

Without any further anxiety on the score of her feelings, I put in: “Mr. Farrar has

left no will, Miss Reed ; and all his property comes to this young lady—his daughter.”

“Then I say it is mean, and shameful—downright shameful ! and——”

“Hush, Marian, pray ; Marian, dear, you forget !” pleaded Mrs. Pratt, laying her hand upon the girl’s arm.

“Am I not his daughter too ? Am I not to say a word if I am left a beggar, after being always led on to expect to be a lady ? It is shameful ; and I do not care who hears me say so !” Flashing a look of angry defiance at us.

Lilian sat gazing at her ; in her sorrow and disappointment, utterly incapable of uttering a word. It had not occurred to her that she might find this kind of sister. She had probably never before been in contact with any one like Marian Reed, and indeed we had both of us expected to see a very different person from this. If she had been only poor—anything like the children of poor parents generally, there would have

been some reason for hope. But now! I afterwards found that Mr. Farrar's very liberal allowance had been expended entirely on Marian Reed herself, Mr. Pratt very decidedly objecting to accept more than a fair remuneration for her board and lodging; and the command of so much money had fostered a natural vanity and love of dress, until she had become the fine lady before us.

"If you will only be good enough to allow me to explain, you will, I think, do Mr. Farrar more justice, as well as spare his daughter, Miss Reed," I said, in a tone which made her turn sharply towards me with a look and gesture which seemed to say: "And who are you?"

Having succeeded so far as to quiet her, I went on: "Mr. Farrar's illness terminated rather suddenly at last, Miss Reed; and the lawyer who was summoned did not arrive in time for the will to be signed——"

“ But he might have——”

I stopped her again.

“ Mr. Farrar did what he could in trusting his daughter to carry out his wishes ; and you will find her only too anxious to do all that is right.”

I saw the round black eyes turn sharply and speculatively upon Lilian for a moment ; then she replied, in a slightly mollified tone :

“ So much depends upon what people consider right, you know.”

I saw that Lilian was battling against herself, and longed to say to her : “ Trust to your instinct, which is altogether against asking this girl to come to live with you. Whatever else you may do, do not yield to a false sentiment in this one thing.” Unfortunately (or fortunately ; looking at the question from this distance of time, I am not really sure which I ought to write), Lilian did *not* obey her instinct. In her anxiety lest she should not carry

out her father's wishes, she was afraid to trust to her own feelings in the matter. When Marian a little impatiently asked :

"I should like to know what *you* call right?" Lilian replied in a low faltering voice.

"He wished me to be good to you ; and I came to-day to ask you to live with me, and—be my sister—for—dear papa's sake. He has left a great deal of money, and quite intended you to share it."

"That is," I hastened to interpose, seeing the effect of the word "share" upon the other—"Mr. Farrar no doubt meant that the allowance which you have hitherto received should be continued to you, Miss Reed. I have reason to think something of that kind was to be done."

"That would be very kind and generous. Wouldn't it, Marian, dear?" said Mrs. Pratt.

"And" (I went on) "perhaps you would prefer remaining with the friends who

have been so good to you, and going on as before, Miss Reed?"

But Miss Reed very quickly gave us to understand that she did not prefer it; though Mrs. Pratt put in a gentle word or two on my side:

"You have always been very comfortable with us, dear!"

Comfortable! That evidently would not be sufficient to satisfy Marian Reed any longer.

"I have been brought up as a young lady, aunt," (at present she had no doubts upon the point); "and learned music, and French, and dancing, and all that; so papa must have intended me to come to live with him some time, and it seems only fair that my sister should ask me.—What's your name, dear? It seems funny my not knowing your name; doesn't it?"

"My name is Lilian."

"Lilian! What a pretty name—quite *charmong*!"

I saw that it was to be; and that the only thing I could now do was to gain a little delay, so I said :

“Of course you will want a little time to prepare, Miss Reed.” She was about to protest; but I quietly went on: “It will be necessary to procure mourning, and so forth.”

“O yes; I had forgotten that,” she replied, eyeing Lilian’s black dress, nearly covered with crape. “Of course I shall;” adding a little apologetically: “You mustn’t expect me to feel exactly the same as you about it, you know. Of course I am very sorry, and all that; but I do not remember ever having seen papa; so it isn’t to be expected that I can feel quite as much as though I had always known him.

“No,” replied Lilian, with what I fancied to be a sigh of relief. She would have even jealously resented this stranger claiming the privilege to share her grief as well as her money. Had he not loved her—and had she not loved him?

There was silence again for a few moments, which was broken by Marian Reed, the most self-possessed of any of us, for even I, the least interested, felt somewhat nonplussed by the aspect of affairs :

"It will take me a good week or ten days to get *distangy* mourning;" with a glance towards Lilian, as she gave that evidence of having learned French. "Suppose we say ten days?"

"Very well," replied Lilian, rising.

"But you haven't given me the address yet, you know. And you must excuse my reminding you that there's been nothing said about last quarter's remittance, which was due last week, and which we have been a great deal inconvenienced by not receiving."

I hastened to put the packet into her hand.

"This was placed ready for us, Miss Reed; but for the address upon it we

might not have found you ; and I daresay you will find it correct."

"O yes ; no doubt," taking it with a negligent air, in amusing contrast with her next words : "And then there's the mourning, you know ; that will have to be paid for ; and good mourning is so expensive."

"O yes ; of course ; I beg your pardon," said Lilian, hurriedly taking out her pocket-book. "This is the address ; and—— no ; I find I have not enough money with me ; but I will send you a cheque when I get home, if that will do. And of course you will like to make some little acknowledgment to the friends who have been always so kind to you."

"Of course I should, if you send enough," sharply replied Miss Reed.

The colour rose in Lilian's cheeks.

"I will send what you please."

"Well, you couldn't say more than that, I'm sure," graciously responded

Miss Reed. "But I'd rather leave it to you."

"Will fifty pounds be enough?"

Mrs. Pratt looked awe-struck ; but her niece, who evidently prided herself upon *sang-froid*, calmly said :

"O yes ; quite enough ; thank you."

"If you will let us know the day and train, we will drive to the station to meet you," said Lilian, her voice sinking lower.

"Yes ; I will write and tell you when I am ready, dear." And after going through the ceremony of shaking hands and bidding us good-morning, Miss Reed sank languidly back into her seat again, leaving her aunt to show us out.

As we reached the foot of the stairs, we could see into a side-room, the door of which was open, and observing some children sitting round a table, I asked :

"Are these your little ones, Mrs. Pratt?"

“ Yes, miss. Would you like to walk in ?”

I did wish to walk in, and availed myself of the invitation, notwithstanding poor Lilian’s pleading look. She was, I knew, anxious to get away as quickly as possible. But I wanted to judge for myself as to whether the contrast between Mrs. Pratt’s children and their cousin was as great as between herself and that young lady.

Seven children, whose ages seemed to range between about five and fifteen, were seated round a neatly spread table at dinner ; and though the fare seemed of the homeliest, they were partaking it with quiet enjoyment under the supervision of an elder sister, a girl of about fifteen, pretty, and fresh, and neat-looking in her print frock. Altogether as refreshing a contrast to the cousin upstairs as could well be conceived.

After one little shy blushing acknow-

ledgment of our greeting, she attended to her business again.

"Don't stare at the ladies, Billy," she whispered, guiding the spoonful of rice, which in his astonishment at seeing us he was sending over his shoulder, towards his mouth.

"She's quite a mother to them already," said Mrs. Pratt, brightening up wonderfully in the presence of her children. "I can't find it in my heart to let her go to service until the others are grown-up a bit. We can't spare Susy, can we, dears?"

This seemed to two or three of the younger ones to indicate that there had been some proposition to take her, and that we were the delinquents. But we hastened to reassure them, and tears were soon dried again, though two or three pairs of sharp little eyes kept watch over Susy.

How heartily I wished that this had been the sister we were seeking; this

modest, good, unpretending Susy. I think the same thought was in Lilian's mind as she wistfully eyed her. The tinkling of a bell sounded in some back place, and Susy said to one of her little brothers :

"Run, Tommy, and tell Miss Reed dinner will soon be ready."

Then I noticed a tray ready spread on a side-table ; and in reply to my look of inquiry, Mrs. Pratt explained :

"Miss Reed " (she was evidently more accustomed to call her Miss Reed than Marian) "lives upstairs, ladies, since she went for a year to boarding-school ; she prefers it."

"And so do we," heartily put in her husband, entering at the moment. "We bring our little ones up to work, ladies. *They* won't get two hundred a year without earning it, and I won't have fine notions put into their heads. I shall be satisfied, I tell them, if they grow up respectable, and not ashamed to look any

one in the face. Miss Reed likes to be a fine lady, and we've got no right to object to that. I don't take any more from her than what pays for her lodging and keep—not a penny; and of course she's a right to do what she likes with the rest; but she never pleased me more than when she made up her mind to keep to her own rooms. Excuse me, ladies; but I've been accustomed to speak my mind, and somehow I always feel bound to say what my mind is, when Miss Reed's being talked about."

Lilian was silent. I murmured something to the effect that I quite agreed with him as regarded making his children as much as possible independent of circumstances.

"Miss Reed's going away, father," said Mrs. Pratt. "These ladies came to tell her that—the gentleman is dead."

"Dead!"

"And this young lady is Miss Farrar,

Jonathan. She has come to ask Marian to go and live with her."

It took Mr. Pratt some little time to get over the surprise; but I soon saw that it was not an altogether disagreeable one.

"It is so good of you, dear young lady," murmured Mrs. Pratt, who scarcely took her eyes from Lilian's face. "So much more than Miss Reed could expect."

"You may well say that, mother!" ejaculated Mr. Pratt. "It is more than she could expect—a deal. Though, to tell the truth, I shan't be so very downhearted about her going, for my part. We can let our rooms again, and—— Well, as I said before, I don't want any of our young ones to grow up after Miss Reed's pattern." At a murmured word from his wife, he put his hand for a moment on her shoulder. "Mrs. Pratt is more soft-hearted, and she naturally feels more for her sister's child than I do; but she's been a good deal put upon, and she'll see it's all for the best that

Miss Reed should go, by-and-by. I can only say that she's kept true to her promise to her dying sister, and the girl can't say anything to the contrary. Her aunt's been a regular slave to her, always ready to cocker up one, who—— Well, there, mother; I won't say any more: what's gone's past; and I hope Miss Reed will be satisfied now, that's all. I never denied but what she's a fine lass enough—to look at; and when she's got all she wants in the way of being fine enough, I daresay she'll be all right. Anyhow, she needn't be afraid of our shaming her. Business is good, and like to be; but if it wasn't, it would make no difference; we shall not run after her. If she likes to come and see her aunt sometimes, I think it would do her good, because, as I've said before, Mrs. Pratt's soft-hearted about her; but even she wouldn't be soft-hearted enough to run after a girl who didn't want to see her.

“Of course you will come to see us at Fairview, Mrs. Pratt,” said Lilian, in her earnest unmistakably sincere way; “and of course she will come often to see you.”

“One thing we needn’t go far to see, miss,” said Mr. Pratt, who was evidently impressed in Lilian’s favour. “I know the real thing when I see it; and that’s why the Brummagem upstairs doesn’t go down with me. There—there; I’ve done, mother. Good-day, ladies; and thank you kindly, for us.”

And after shaking hands with Mrs. Pratt and her children, Lilian pressing her purse into Susy’s hand, we took our departure, escorted to the cab by Mr. Pratt.

CHAPTER XI.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

OUR journey back to Fairview was a very silent one. Under the plea of being tired, Lilian lay back in the railway carriage with her eyes closed and veil down. I did not disturb her, and for the best of reasons : I could think of nothing very cheering which could be honestly said. Marian Reed was an unpleasant fact, which could not be argued out of existence, nor even smoothed over by all the words in the dictionary combined.

The carriage was waiting for us at the railway station ; and only just as

we arrived at Fairview did I venture to speak :

“Are you going to tell Mrs. Tipper, to-night, Lilian ?”

“Yes. And you will help me, will you not, Mary? I shall depend upon that ;” clinging closer to me, and feeling, I knew, terribly in need of help.

“Of course I will, if you wish it, Lilian. But I must stipulate that you first come to my room and rest for an hour.”

She obeyed me like a child—utterly worn out in spirit, holding my hand fast in hers as she lay on the couch, and murmuring every now and again :

“Help me, Mary ; don’t leave me.”

“Since I have promised, I suppose I must, my dear,” I replied in a rallying tone. “But I do not generally care much about helping people who do not help themselves.”

She yielded to a burst of tears.

“That’s better, dear—far more sensible,”

I remarked, wiping my own eyes : "one generally gets on more comfortably after availing one's self of that privilege."

"Privilege?"

" 'Right,' if you prefer the word ; one of our rights. If one could attain the end by more dignified means, it might be as well ; but the grandest of heroines occasionally shed tears, so I suppose it is the best known method of making one's self comfortable, and harmless enough when used with discretion—as heroines use it."

" Ah, Mary, you are not talking like yourself. When you talk like that, I sometimes think it is to conceal——"

" Well, dear ; why do not you go on ? To conceal what—that I am *not* a heroine?" I asked in a jesting tone, only too glad to be able to draw her sufficiently away from painful reflection for a little nonsense-talk.

"I sometimes think that having larger needs than other people——"

"Well, dear?"

"Which needs have not been satisfied——"

"There is something still required to make a complete sentence, you know."

"Are large needs ever quite satisfied, Mary?"

"Dear Lilian — dear sister -- perhaps not."

"Mary, you said *sister*!" A soft flush in her face, and eager love in her eyes.

"Because I meant it, I suppose, dearie; I can give no other reason," I said, trying still to keep the jesting tone. "If you do not object to an elderly sister?"

"Not if elder sisters do not put themselves out of reach of the sympathy of the younger."

"Put themselves," I repeated musingly. "May not circumstances do that for them?"

"When will you tell me—dear Mary, when will you let me feel that you really are like a sister to me?"

At which I morbidly shrank back into my shell again.

"When my love story is finished you shall hear it."

"Finished! as though a love-story ever *could* be finished—as though you or I would care to have one, if it could! But you have not told me even the beginning."

"You have found out that for yourself, dearie."

"And am I right in thinking—? I hope I am not; but—Dear Mary, am I to say exactly what I think?"

"Exactly."

"Then sometimes I think that one you loved——Mary, is he dead?"

Dead! Philip dead! I laughed in spirit. If he were dead, should I be alive—in this way? I did not reflect that my silence and the few tears which stole down my

cheeks might seem to bear out her theory as to my having something to regret. But I presently shook myself free of sentiment, smilingly observing that we could not afford the luxury of analysing our feelings just then. Sentiment would be only a stumbling-block in our way, when we needed all the nerve, courage, and steady self-control we could muster.

“To begin with : would you like me to make matters smooth and pleasant with Mrs. Tipper before dinner, Lilian ? You would then perhaps find less difficulty in broaching the subject to Mr. Trafford, if, as I fancy, you prefer doing so in our presence ?”

“Yes ; I do prefer that, ever so much ; and I shall be glad if you will tell auntie, Mary.”

As I had anticipated, we found no difficulty in bringing the dear little lady to our way of thinking. As soon as she had in some degree recovered her astonishment at

the revelation, she expressed her entire approval of what had been done. She was not a little shocked and distressed to find her brother had been less perfect than she had imagined him to be ; but it appeared to her a natural and right thing that Marian Reed should be asked to come to reside at Fairview. Even my little "aside," which I thought necessary, lest her expectations should be unduly raised, to the effect that we did not as yet feel quite sure Marian would be a desirable person to live with, had no weight with Mrs. Tipper. She could only look at the question from one point of view—whether it was right to do as Lilian had done. Whether the other would be more or less pleasant to get on with, was, in her estimation, beside the matter. There were no more complications in Mrs. Tipper's estimate of right and wrong, than there were in her niece's.

Our real difficulty was to come ; and

although she said no word about it, I knew Lilian felt that it was. : Arthur Trafford was dining with us ; he had very rarely missed coming since Mr. Farrar's death. But it was not until after dinner, when we had returned to the morning-room (we all preferred its cosiness to the drawing-room splendour, now), that the subject was approached.

In reply to her lover's question, which had been asked more than once during dinner, and was now repeated, as to how she had got through the day, Lilian drew nearer to me and murmured :

" Mary and I went to town, Arthur."

" To town ! What for ? Why in the world did you not tell me you were going ? It was not like you, Lilian, to say no word to me about your intention last night," with, I fancied, a rather suspicious glance towards me as he went on : " I do not like the idea of your running about like a mere ——"

She looked very pale, seeking, I think, in her mind for the best way of commencing.

“I was obliged to go ; and you must try not to blame me for having said nothing about it to you first, Arthur,” she said in a low tremulous tone, which I saw flattered his vanity, as proof of his power, and the timid, yielding spirit, which he was pleased to think so characteristic of her. Not that he wished her to be timid and yielding to any one but himself ; or was ready to make sufficient allowance for her acting according to her nature, upon all occasions.

“Blame you, darling ! I am only anxious that you should be *properly* protected”—with an emphasis and glance in my direction, which would have given me some reason to quake, had Mr. Trafford’s friendship been of great moment to me. But I was quite aware that little as I had been in favour before, I had been

steadily and surely declining in his estimation since Mr. Farrar's death ; and being, therefore, quite prepared for what was to come, I took no offence at the "properly."

Lilian slipped her hand into mine.

"We were quite safe, Arthur ; it is not that——" She hesitated a moment, then added, crimsoning to her temples : "There is something to tell you. Poor papa made a—communication to Mary and me, the night—at the last, Arthur."

"A communication !" I saw he was now really disturbed ; too much so to make objection to the "Mary and me." "What do you mean, Lilian ? The—will——"

"The property was to have been shared" (she again carelessly used the word "shared," in her indifference to the money part of the question) "between me and—another, if papa had lived to sign his will, Arthur."

"But he did *not* live to sign it !" he ejaculated, heaving a great sigh of relief,

and, somewhat to my amusement, glancing triumphantly towards me.

I saw now that he had jumped to the conclusion that I was the "other" alluded to.

"No ; but his last wishes would be binding to me, Arthur, even if I had not given a promise," said Lilian.

To spare her—I could see that he was on the verge of giving expression to what was in his thoughts, which would have unnecessarily pained as well as astonished her—I came to her assistance.

"Mr. Farrar made a revelation to Lilian and me during his last moments, Mr. Trafford. There is another daughter living, and he begged Lilian to do the justice which he himself was not spared to do, though the will was prepared in which Marian was provided for."

"Another daughter ! Share !"

In his first astonishment and dismay he was only able to compass those two facts.

But he presently added :

"He must have been raving. It would be the height of folly to take such a statement as that seriously ; of course he did not know what he was saying."

"It has been proved to be true, Mr. Trafford. There *is* another daughter, and Lilian and I have seen her."

He had had a few moments for reflection, and something of the truth, I think, began to dawn upon him. Looking towards me, he said :

"I never heard that Mr. Farrar was married more than once, and I know Lilian was her mother's only child."

"Lilian's sister is three or four years older than she is, Mr. Trafford," I explained.

He understood now, and said :

"In that case, Mr. Farrar could never seriously have contemplated allowing her to share his property with his lawful child, Miss Haddon. And it is all the more to

be regretted that you did not take me into your confidence at once, Lilian," turning reproachfully towards her. "Such matters are generally, and very properly, left to the management of gentlemen ; and the lawyer and I could have spared you being brought into contact with——"

"Papa left it to me to do, Arthur," said Lilian, in a low voice.

"Because he was not at the time capable of judging what was best to be done, and he had no male friend at hand. I can never sufficiently regret happening to be out of the way that night. But you will learn in time to understand the matter rightly. It would be wrong to his wife and child—altogether false sentiment—to talk about doing more than is customary in such cases. Proper provision should, of course, be made ; but I entirely set my face against raising a person of that kind above the station to which she doubtlessly belongs."

“Papa begged me to be good to her, and I must obey his last wishes. A moment, Arthur? It is indeed too late to draw back now. I have already seen my—sister, and have asked her to come to live at Fairview.”

“To live! Here—with you? Lilian, have you taken leave of your senses?”

“I have told you—I promised papa to be good to her,” repeated Lilian with a gentle persistence, for which I think he was entirely unprepared.

“Nonsense, Lilian!” he replied, with an angry glance in my direction. “You have been badly advised, I fear. You may be good to the girl without going to such unnecessary lengths as you seem to contemplate doing. Besides, something is surely due to me in the matter. Considering our relation towards each other, I have just grounds for thinking myself very unfairly treated in not being informed of all this

before. I ought to have been allowed some voice in the matter."

Had he been anyway different from himself, I might have agreed with him; but then Lilian would have acted very differently. Though she knew it not, she had acted as she had done because he was what he was, and not from any other reason. She had intuitively shrunk from telling him until it was too late for interference; and he himself had been to blame for that. And though she was now rather uncomfortably conscious that, in her anxiety to carry out her father's wishes, she had overstepped the limits of prudence, it was not because Arthur Trafford pointed it out to her that she was conscious of it.

"I was so desirous to do what is right," she murmured.

"And that was the best thing you could desire, my dear," cheerily put in Mrs. Tipper. "Never fear but good will come of it; and I really can't see why

we shouldn't all be comfortable together."

"A sort of happy family, cats, bats, and owls;" angrily ejaculated Arthur Trafford. "I am afraid I should not be found sufficiently tame for such a dove-cot, Mrs. Tipper!"

Lilian laid her hand upon his arm, looking with a pained expression into his face.

"Are you really angry with me, Arthur? Do you give me credit for *wishing* to vex you?"

"I am hurt at your want of confidence in me, Lilian. I do not see how you could expect me to be otherwise."

These were better tactics. He saw that they were, and kept up the injured tone. Presently he asked her to go out into the grounds. I believe he fancied that he had now found the way to influence her, and that it only needed to get her away from our vicinity to bring her entirely round to

his own way of thinking. He did not know Lilian Farrar.

An hour later she came in looking more wearied and sad, but not worsted. Moreover, by her absolute silence respecting what had taken place between them, I knew that she had had me as well as herself to defend. But, as I had expected, he had not succeeded in inducing her to alter her plans; and the first shadow of the truth had fallen upon both. They knew that they were each something different from what the other had supposed.

During the intervening ten days, the subject of Marian Reed's expected arrival was touched upon as little as possible between us; though I believe we could none of us think of anything else, we avoided anything like discussion upon it. The only words which passed between Lilian and me on the subject were with reference to the room which was to be prepared for her, and one hesitating remark to the effect that

Marian might perhaps prefer the relationship not being made known, since she could only be called Miss Reed.

Arthur Trafford had had time for reflection; and had, I think, come to the conclusion that his wisest course was to make no more objections for the present, but to quietly await the issue. Dear old Mrs. Tipper looked anxious and nervous, though she made one or two attempts to smooth matters, amiably opining that the newcomer might prove an agreeable acquisition to our circle, and so forth. But it was evident that she dreaded the arrival of Marian Reed as much as the rest of us. As to the financial part of the question, she judged that in her own unconventional fashion Lilian would be none the less happy for some diminution being made in her large fortune. Her brother had never been quite so happy in affluence as when he was working his way to it; and as to herself, she had more than once confided to

me that existence at Fairview was not to be compared to the old times, when she had been busy from morning to night keeping her little cottage home in order. In truth, such society as she had seen at Fairview had no attraction for her ; and her sympathies were entirely on the side of a modest competence.

Lilian grew at length so restless and anxious, that for her sake I was quite relieved when the day fixed for Marian Reed to make her appearance amongst us arrived. Anything was better than the suspense we were all in, or rather I thought so then.

Lilian had received a note from Miss Reed, saying that we might expect her the following morning by the mid-day train, and reminding the former of her promise about sending the carriage. It was written in the orthodox boarding-school, pointed, illegible style ; signed "Your Affectionate Sister," and evidently meant to be an elegant specimen

of Miss Reed's epistolary powers. It must, I think, have cost her no little trouble to join together so many fine words to convey the intelligence that we might expect her.

Lilian tried hard to overcome the dread, not to say antipathy, she felt; honestly tried; but it was no use; first impressions had been terribly against Marian Reed. The poorest cottager's child seemed a more desirable inmate for Fairview than the elegant Miss Reed. The nervous way with which Lilian reminded me: "You have promised not to forsake me, Mary," when the time at length arrived, would have told me how much she dreaded what was to come, had I not already known. I made no profession—none was needed between us. She understood, and was satisfied with my quiet way now.

We nevertheless found it necessary to clasp hands, and look for a moment into each other's eyes, as a tacit reassurance that whatever might come to pass we two were

to hold together, when the carriage drew up before the railway station.

We had no difficulty in recognising Miss Reed. The young lady in deep mourning, her dress trailing half a yard behind her on the ground, haughtily giving directions to the porter to see to her luggage, was unmistakable.

“And look after the carriage; I expect a carriage is——” She turned and caught sight of us advancing towards her. “Oh, here is my sister! I thought you would be waiting, dear” (kissing Lilian very demonstratively; I was uncharitable enough to suspect, more for the edification of the people standing about the platform, than from exuberance of feeling). “Did you come in the carriage?”

“Yes; we drove over.”

This I fancy suggested the idea of a small chaise to Miss Reed; and she expressed her fear that her boxes “and all that” would be more than we could take.

Lilian explained that a luggage-cart was in waiting for that purpose.

"Oh, of course!" And with a negligent air Miss Reed went through the booking-office with us.

But the first sight of "the carriage" was almost too much for her philosophy. She uttered an involuntary ejaculation of astonishment when she saw the barouche with its couple of spirited horses and the men-servants. She, however, very quickly recovered her self-possession, sinking back into her seat with a graceful languor, which seemed to indicate that if she had not gone through the process before, she had watched others doing it. She was quite at ease; and as she proceeded to make talk about the weather, the country we were passing through, and so forth, I saw that Lilian was much less self-possessed than was Marian Reed, gladly leaving me to answer for her.

Much as she desired to do right, it would

take Lilian some time yet to feel that this was a sister. Her very anxiety lest she should not be kind and considerate enough, made her appear nervous and ill at ease. At the outset Marian Reed had placed us awkwardly, by showing that she meant to force the sistership upon every one's notice. I know now that she herself experienced no sort of shame or delicacy respecting the relationship ; whilst Lilian by her very nature felt so much, and could not in the least perceive the true cause of the other's attitude. Indeed the very self-assertion seemed to Lilian but assumed as a sort of self-defence against people's want of charity in such cases.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER-CURRENTS.

THE first sight of Fairview was a fresh trial to Marian Reed's philosophy: I saw her colour rise, and heard her murmured "Good gracious!" as we drove in at the gates and round the sweep to the house. The men-servants were another test of her power of self-command. But on the whole it was wonderful how well she contrived to avoid giving expression to her astonishment. Beyond the first hurried ejaculation and a momentary catching in of the breath now and again, she exhibited no sign of the effect which the Farrar magnificence had upon her.

We turned into the first room we came to, and Lilian bade her sister welcome in her father's name ; tenderly and kindly, if a little gravely, hoping that she would feel it was her home.

" O yes ; I am sure we shall get on together," good-naturedly returned Marian. " What is there to prevent it, you know ? I think any one must be hard to please indeed, not to be satisfied here ;" looking round the room until her eyes met the reflection of themselves in the chimney-glass, where they complacently rested.

I could not but acknowledge that they were good eyes, and that she was altogether what is called a fine girl, with a handsome face, which to an uneducated taste might perhaps be preferable to Lilian's—but, I insisted to myself, only to an unrefined taste. In truth I was woman enough to admit that much only grudgingly. Though the features were good, they were rather large, and the colouring too vivid ; eyes and

hair so very black, and complexion so very red and white, made it quite refreshing to me to turn to Lilian's more delicately moulded and tinted loveliness. Marian Reed was tall as well as large, two or three inches taller than Lilian ; but the latter was tall enough for grace.

She was attired in the most expensive style of mourning, which was a great deal more be-frilled and be-puffed than Lilian's plain deep black.

There was a few moments' pause on Lilian's side, and then she nervously began :

" Mary, perhaps Miss Reed would like——"

" Oh, you must not call me ' Miss Reed ' now, you know," she interrupted : " sisters ought not to be stiff with each other."

I saw that the " sister " was not to be lost sight of for a moment.

" I was going to say that perhaps you would like to see my aunt at

once — before going to your room — Marian."

"Aunt! Have you got an aunt, dear?"

"Yes; my father's sister—my dear aunt lives with me."

"Oh, indeed!" ejaculated Miss Reed, with a somewhat heightened colour. She had not calculated upon finding any one besides Lilian. "But," she presently added, as though it had suddenly occurred to her, "if she is your aunt, of course she is mine too."

"Will you come, Marian?"

"Yes; of course I will, dear;" and with a parting glance at the glass, she followed us to the morning-room.

Mrs. Tipper rose to receive us with her company manner; and I saw she was very much struck with Marian Reed's appearance. It was a face and figure more attractive to Mrs. Tipper than Lilian's. Much as she thought of the quiet loveliness of Lilian, I saw she was quite dazzled by

Marian Reed ; and being dazzled, did not judge with her usual good sense.

“ Delighted to see you, I’m sure. Charming morning, is it not ? I hope you have had a pleasant drive ;” and so forth ; running through all the polite little speeches which belonged to the genteel phase of her life, and then leaving the other to carry on the talk.

Marian prided herself not a little upon her boarding-school manners ; and felt, I think, quite in her element as she gave a few fine speeches in return. Seeing that she could keep it up much longer than could the dear little old lady, and that the latter was growing more and more silent and uncomfortable, I put in a word or two, which brought us all to a level again. I am afraid the means which I took to bring Miss Reed down were a little trying to that young lady. I should not have employed them had any but ourselves been present, or had I been able to think of a

better way ; but I really could not allow her to begin by making my dear old friend afraid of her, as I saw she very quickly would. So I inquired after Mr. and Mrs. Pratt and the children, hoped business was still flourishing, and so forth ; going on to inform Mrs. Tipper that Miss Reed's uncle had a shop in Islington.

Lilian looked not a little surprised at my making such an allusion, and Marian flashed an angry glance from her black eyes towards me. But I saw that this was a young lady who would very soon reign at Fairview, if some one did not keep her a little in order ; and as there seemed to be no one else to do it, I undertook the task myself. A more refined way of proceeding would not, I felt sure, have had the desired effect with Miss Reed. My little speech made Mrs. Tipper comfortable, to begin with.

“Then you won't mind me, my dear,” she said, with a sigh of relief ; “I've been

accustomed to trade all my life, before brother, in his goodness, brought me to live here ; and of course my heart's in it." And straightway she threw off her company manners and became her dear homely self again ; fussing about the new-comer with all sorts of hospitable suggestions. "If you won't take luncheon, say a glass of wine and a biscuit, dear. It is nearl three hours till dinner-time, and you mustn't feel shy with us, you know."

Miss Reed disclaimed feeling in the least degree shy ; afraid, I fancy, of not appearing quite equal to the occasion.

"Shy ! O no ; not at all ;" stiffly.

To help Lilian, who looked timid and shy enough, I suggested that perhaps Miss Reed might like to go to her room, where one of the maids could help her to arrange her wardrobe. She elected so to do ; and Lilian and I went with her to the luxurious bed-chamber which had been prepared for her. Her eyes turned at once towards the

cheval glass, and I noticed that she was mentally contrasting herself with Lilian, and that the conclusion she arrived at was entirely in her own favour. Then she preferred to be left to see to the unpacking, assuring us that she began to feel quite at home already. Lilian, who had not yet quite recovered her strength, yielded to my persuasions, and went to her own room to rest until dinner-time.

After dilating upon Marian Reed's evident predilection for examining herself in any glass she happened to be near, it is but right to acknowledge my own weakness that afternoon. On entering my room I walked straight to the dressing-glass, and stood gazing at myself; ay, and with some little favour too! I had been so accustomed to contrast myself with Lilian, that I had come to estimate my own looks at something below their value. In contrast with Marian Reed, my brown eyes and pale face and all the rest of it came quite into favour

again, and I told myself Philip might have done worse after all. Smiling graciously at myself, I now saw quite another face to that which usually greeted me in the dressing-glass, and the more conscious I became of the fact, the pleasanter I found it.

When Becky, who at my request was appointed to attend to my small requirements, presently entered the room, I think she also noticed a change as I made some smiling remark to her over my shoulder.

"How well you do look this afternoon, miss! There! I do wish they could see you now—they couldn't call you nothing to look at now!" she ejaculated, gazing approvingly at me. "Why don't you let your eyes shine like that, as if you was laughing inside, downstairs?"

"Because I don't often laugh inside, as you term it, downstairs, I suppose, Becky," I replied amusedly.

"Then you ought to try to ; for it makes

you look ever so much prettier," she gravely returned.

"Well, perhaps I ought."

"Of course you ought, miss. I only wish I could make myself prettier, only a-smiling. Tom" (Tom was one of the under-gardeners, of late often quoted by Becky) "says it's worse when I smiles ; though I want bigger eyes, and a straighter nose, and a new skin, and ever so many more things, besides a smaller mouth, before I set up for being good-looking. And they all says I do grin so. I can't help it, because I'm so happy ; but of course it must be nicer to look well when you laugh, instead of looking as though your head was only held on by a little bit behind, as they say I do. And I tell them it's all your own hair, though they won't believe even that. Mr. Saunders says it can't be ; though you manage to hide where it joins better than some of the ladies. But haven't I watched you doing it up many and many a time."

I had it in my hands, brushing it out as she spoke; and murmured softly to myself, looking graciously down at it :

“It is long and thick, and a nice colour, too, I think.”

This was something quite new to Becky, who was in the habit of taking me to task for not making the most of myself. I fancy she thought that I was at last becoming alive to the importance of looking well.

“To be sure it is ! I call it lovely—the colour of the mahogany chairs. O, Miss Haddon dear, do let me run and fetch some flowers to stick in, like Miss Farrar does, and then they’ll see !”

But to Becky’s astonishment, I did not want them to see. My mood had changed; I hastily put up my hair, and turned away from the glass.

“No; I think I will depend upon the smiling inside, Becky.”

“But you are not smiling. O miss, I

haven't said anything to vex you, have I?"

"You, Becky!" I turned and kissed the face Tom despised, astounding her still more by the unusual demonstration. "Foolish Becky!" I added, as with a heightened colour she bent down and kissed the shawl she was folding up, "to waste a kiss in that improvident fashion!"

"I've often seen you kiss that little locket that hangs to your watch-chain when you thought I wasn't looking," sharply returned Becky.

An idea suddenly suggested itself to me, and I acted upon it without trying to analyse my reason for so doing.

"Would you like to see what is inside that locket, Becky?"

"Yes; that I should, miss! I have wondered about it so." And she added gravely, understanding that it was to be a confidence: "You may trust me never to tell nobody."

"Of course I know that I can trust you, Becky," I said, pressing the spring and disclosing Philip's portrait.

"My ! what a nice-looking young gentleman ! Who is he ?" she asked herself. "I haven't never seen him, have I ? Not a young brother ?"

"No."

Then, hesitatingly :

"The young man you once walked out with, miss ?"

I nodded.

"And—he's dead, isn't he, dear Miss Haddon ?"

Involuntarily I uttered a little cry of pain. Why did every one suppose him to be dead ?

"No, not dead, Becky."

"Took to walking out with somebody else, and give you up ?"

"No ; I have not been given up ;" my foolish heart sinking. "Cannot you think of something else, Becky ?" a little pleadingly.

“Did he do something wrong, miss, and that made you give *him* up? Though he don’t look like that neither;” musingly.

I closed the locket, and found that it was time to go down to dinner.

CHAPTER XIII.

ARTHUR TRAFFORD'S TACTICS.

I FOUND Marian Reed in the morning-room with Mrs. Tipper, and she had already assumed the *haut-en-bas* tone in talking with the little lady. The latter had innocently thought that the lowliness of their antecedents would be a bond of union between them ; but Miss Marian Reed considered that her boarding-school education placed her far above the level of poor people, though she had for a time lived with them. She had not of late associated with her aunt and cousins ; and she had no sympathy with one like Mrs. Tipper, who was not ashamed to talk about the times

when she had lived in a cottage, and done her own washing and scrubbing. She was loftily explaining that she had never soiled her hands with "menial" work, as I entered the room.

Miss Reed had evidently taken a great deal of pains with her toilet; and I was obliged to acknowledge to myself that she looked very striking, and better in a room than in walking-gear. Moreover, she got through the rather trying ordeal of dining for the first time at a luxurious table, much better than might have been expected. She did not suffer from any doubts about herself; and was consequently free from self-consciousness, as well as being quick to note and imitate the ways of others. In conversation she was quite at ease. The consciousness of an acquaintance with Pinnock, French, music, and so forth; and the entire freedom from doubt as to her ability to cope with any question which might arise, imparted an ease and con-

fidence to her tone not usually seen in girls of more perception. Moreover, I could not but acknowledge that she was clever in the way of being quick to seize such ideas as were presented to her. And yet hers was just the kind of cleverness which makes some people shrink from the designation as a reproach—the flippant shallow sharpness which so grates upon the nerves, so to speak, of the mind. She was the kind of girl who would talk a philosopher mute, and not have the slightest misgivings about the cause of his silence.

Her bearing towards me had undergone a change, which for a while somewhat puzzled me. I was not a little amused when I discovered the cause. Mrs. Tipper had innocently divulged the fact that I was paid for my services at Fairview ; and as I had made her a little afraid of me, the relief of finding that I could be displaced at will was great in proportion. She was now loftily condescending towards me,

sufficiently marking her sense of the distance between us; though I think somewhat at a loss to account for my cheerfulness under it. In truth I was audacious enough to rather enjoy the fun of the situation, and for the moment did not attempt to hide my amusement.

But when, after dinner, Arthur Trafford made his appearance, the new-comer's attention was very quickly diverted from me. He was waiting for us in the morning-room, and naturally enough curious to see the new-comer. And however great his objection to her coming there, he was gentleman enough to greet her in the right way. Indeed, now that the matter had got beyond his control, he was, I think, desirous to make the *amende* to Lilian for his previous too dictatorial objections. Probably, too, he perceived that he was not likely to carry his point by such means, though he was not hopeless of doing so by another way.

He took great pains to make himself agreeable to Marian Reed ; and it was very evident that his little courteous speeches had their full effect. He was doubtless the first gentleman she had conversed with ; and I could see that she was a great deal impressed, I think, in enduing his deferential and earnest tone with a deeper meaning than he intended them to have.

Lilian looked pleasantly on, accepting his courtesy to Marian as a kindness to herself, after what had taken place. She was very triumphant about it to me afterwards, as a proof of his goodness of heart, and so forth. For the present she was content to sit apart, thanking him with an occasional glance.

But after a while he appeared to consider that he had done quite sufficient to earn some reward, and drew Lilian out to the garden. Miss Reed was thumping away at the piano, playing a showy school-piece for his delectation ; and when she presently

looked round, she discovered that her cavalier had disappeared.

“Why, where’s——”

“Mr. Trafford is with Lilian in the garden,” I explained.

“Oh, is he? Then I will go too,” rising as she spoke. “I haven’t seen the garden yet.”

“I think you must put up with my attendance, Miss Reed. Lovers are privileged to be unsociable.”

“Lovers!” she ejaculated. “You don’t mean to say—— He *can’t* be her lover!”

“He is, I assure you, Miss Reed. They have been engaged some time, and will be married as soon as circumstances permit.”

“I should never have thought—he wasn’t a bit like a lover—to her,” she said in a half angry tone, her colour more raised than I had yet seen it. In fact, as I suspected, Miss Reed’s fancy had been caught—to herself no doubt she termed it falling

in love, and she was a young lady of very strong impulses, which were entirely untrained. In their ultra refinement, Arthur Trafford's good looks were precisely the kind to attract one like Marian Reed—his fashionable languid air being especially attractive to one who indulged in the kind of literature which is not remarkable for backbone. She curtly declined going into the garden with me, and drew a chair towards one of the windows, where she sat watching the two figures as they passed and repassed in the strip of moonlight outside, her brows lowering and face darkening.

Mrs. Tipper amiably endeavoured to do her part towards entertaining her; but Marian Reed was not in the mood to be entertained by Mrs. Tipper; and made it so very evident that she was not, that the little lady became silent and constrained, though, strange to say, I do not think her admiration for the girl decreased in consequence.

Presently Marian went to the piano again, and amused herself trying bits of Lilian's songs; apparently considering neither Mrs. Tipper nor me worth cultivating. But I forced myself upon her notice so far as to tell her that Lilian might consider it to be too soon after her father's death for song-singing. Miss Reed opined that that was all nonsense. There was no necessity for being gloomy, and a little singing and music would rouse her up a little.

The music had certainly a rousing effect, though not in the precise way she imagined; and her singing! Accustomed as I was to Lilian's sweet voice and pure style, it was almost excruciating to listen to her songs as rendered by the other's loud untrained voice. I sat down by my dear old friend's side at a distant window, and did my best to make up for Marian Reed's rudeness. But she had not taken offence. As she generally did in such cases, she simply

attributed it all to her own want of breeding, and that being irremediable, accepted the consequences without repining. Moreover, she was full of admiration of Marian Reed's good looks.

"Is she not handsome, my dear?" was her little aside to me. "And seems so accomplished too." (One "tune," as she termed it, was quite as good as another, from an artistic point of view, to Mrs. Tipper.) "Such a good thing for Lilian that Miss Reed has been educated like a lady, is it not? To tell the truth, I was rather afraid she might turn out to be a common person like me, you know. At her age I should never have done for Fairview; not even so well as I do now. Knowing the piano and French does make such a difference, doesn't it?"

I could but raise the hand I held to my lips, dissenting so entirely as I did from the notion of Marian Reed's superiority. And I believed that Mrs. Tipper herself

was only dazzled for a time ; her perception was too true to be blinded for very long.

When the lovers re-entered, I saw that they were regarded by Marian with a new and uneasy curiosity.

In our *tête-à-tête* that night, Lilian could talk of nothing but her lover's goodness and readiness to fall in with her scheme for Marian's welfare. " Dear Arthur, he made no objections now. He had only objected at first, because he felt a little hurt, as it was quite natural he should, at not being consulted. But everything would be well now."

I listened in some little surprise to this sudden change in his tactics, until Lilian unconsciously gave me the key.

" Arthur is quite willing now. She is to be always free to live at Fairview, as long as she is inclined, and have five hundred a year, as I wish her to have. But he says there is no necessity for legal arrangements,

as though we could not trust each other, you know."

Had I considered Marian Reed's claims to be as great as Lilian considered them to be, I might have tried my influence against Arthur Trafford's in the matter. As it was, I urged no objection to his arrangement, though I quite understood its import. It would of course be quite possible for Lilian's husband so to contrive matters that Marian Reed would not be long inclined to live at Fairview; and as to the five hundred a year! well, I believed it would do no real harm to her if she were by-and-by reduced to two hundred and her former sphere again. Hers was not the nature to improve in consequence of having more power in her hands, and a sister or companion for Lilian she never would be. It was too late in the day for any radical change in her tastes and habits. They were travelling different roads, and the longer they lived the farther they would be apart.

Lilian's sentiments, as days passed by, were not difficult to fathom. Her very anxiety to make the most of anything in favour of the girl her whole soul shrank from, spoke volumes to me. Indeed she had no little difficulty in combating the repulsion which it shocked her to feel towards her father's child.

Marian did not miss anything or suffer, as the other would have done in her place. She never perceived the underlying cause of Lilian's anxiety to please and conciliate her. It was not in her nature to see that Lilian was, so to speak, always pleading for forgiveness for the wrong done to Marian's mother, and trying to expiate her father's fault. Then, conscious as she was of shrinking from the coarser mind, which was being day by day unfolded to us, poor Lilian was terribly afraid lest it should be apparent to the other; not perceiving that the very fact of its being coarse rendered it the more impervious. In

truth, self-assertion and *hauteur* would have won a great deal more respect from Marian, than did the too evident desire to please. She was beginning almost to look down upon the girl she could not understand; conscious how different she herself would be were she in Lilian's place and Lilian in hers; and was without any misgivings as to her own superiority. She was also beginning to assume a great deal, and I was the only one to do battle with her, though I had some difficulty in keeping her within due bounds now. As it may be supposed, I did not gain favour with her. There was the difference that she liked Lilian and looked down upon her; whilst she disliked me and was a little afraid of me.

Mrs. Chichester made great and palpable efforts to act against her judgment in noticing Miss Reed; "for dear Lilian's sake," as she confided to Robert Wentworth and me. "It was the only thing to

be done now. Of course she could not but regret that dear Lilian should not have asked the advice of some judicious friend in the matter. No one could doubt its being a mistake to bring Miss Reed to Fairview ; now did not Mr. Wentworth think so ?”

“ Yes ; Mr. Wentworth did think so.”

“ And what did dear Miss Haddon think ?”

Miss Haddon had advised Lilian to follow her instincts in the matter.

“ But pray excuse me ; do not you think that is rather dangerous advice to give—to some persons ?”

“ Yes, I do, Mrs. Chichester.”

At which Mrs. Chichester was in a flutter of consternation, lest I should for one moment imagine that she had meant to be unkind in leading me on to make such an admission of fallibility, and prettily begged Mr. Wentworth to give his assistance to enable her to obtain my forgiveness.

It took their united powers of persuasion, and gave Mrs. Chichester opportunities for all sorts of pretty amiabilities, before Miss Haddon could be brought to reason; and then the former had to be satisfied with what she termed "a very slight unbending of the stern brow," as an acknowledgment of my defeat.

Then how pleasant and amiable it was to take all the trouble she did to put me in a good humour with myself again, by pointing out that the very wisest of us may sometimes err in our judgment, and so forth. Matters were progressing thus agreeably, when Lilian wanted Mrs. Chichester's advice about the arrangement of some ferns in the conservatory, and I was left for a few moments alone with Robert Wentworth.

"Lilian did *not* obey her instincts in inviting this Miss Reed to come to reside with her, Miss Haddon."

I smiled.

"And believing that, you allowed the

stigma of being an injudicious friend to be attached to me."

"Because I saw you so willed it ; and I do not waste my powers of oratory when they are not required."

Then, abruptly changing the subject—there was none of the suavity and consideration which Mrs. Chichester considered to be so essential to friendship between him and me—he went on :

"Tell me what you think of this Miss Reed. Is she what she appears to be?"

"What does she appear to you?"

"Well, I suppose we could not expect her to be quite a gentlewoman ; but really — Your little Becky is a great deal nearer the mark, according to my standard."

"Yes, I think she is."

"And time will do nothing for her—not the slightest hope of it ! She would never be a companion for Lilian, if they lived together a hundred years—of course you see that."

For Lilian ! How plainly he was always showing that she was the centre to which all his thoughts converged.

"Yes ; I see that they will never be companions ; but Miss Reed will miss nothing ; she will do no harm to Lilian."

"Not in one way, perhaps."

"Not in any way, Mr. Wentworth, other than paining her sometimes."

"But if that might have been avoided ?"

"Neither sorrow nor pain, nor any other thing, will injure Lilian in the long-run. You ought to know that."

"I am not an advocate for enduring unnecessary pain, Miss Haddon."

"I believe Lilian will have to suffer—it may be a great deal—and some preliminary training will enable her to bear what is to come all the easier."

"I am afraid Mrs. Chichester is right after all, in considering you to be a little hard, Miss Haddon."

"Afraid Mrs. Chichester is right ! I

have a great mind to tell her!" I ejaculated, rising.

"Have a greater mind, and don't," he smilingly returned.

"But it might be good for you to go into training a little as well as the rest of us; and Mrs. Chichester might not object to undertake——"

"Could not you try what you could do towards bringing me into a better frame of mind?" he said. "It would be like an acknowledgment of weakness to hand me over to Mrs. Chichester, you know. You might at any rate try what could be done for me before acknowledging yourself unequal to the task in that faint-hearted way."

"In other words, you want me to stay and talk Lilian to you," was my mental comment, as I shook my head and moved away.

As I have said, I liked Robert Wentworth better than any other gentleman who

came to Fairview. Arthur Trafford occasionally brought a friend with him down to dinner ; but his friends were not of the pattern which pleased me—men who looked, and spoke, and moved as though they were only playing the part of supernumeraries on the stage of life. With Robert Wentworth there was all the pleasure of feeling that I was thoroughly understood. I was indeed able to unfold my thoughts to him, as I could not even to Lilian, love her as I did. She was a girl, and I a woman, and she deferred to me as to an elder sister ; constantly, though unconsciously, reminding me of the eleven years' difference between our ages.

Robert Wentworth and I met on equal terms. With him I neither gave nor obtained quarter ; and our encounters were as refreshing as a tonic to my mental health. Whatever the subject broached, we freely showed each other our thoughts about it ; and I learned to give and take a

blow with perfect good-humour. I was sometimes not a little startled to find how completely he was beginning to track out certain tendencies, which I had hitherto flattered myself were so safely packed away out of sight as to be unknown to those with whom I associated. More than once the common-sense which he bantered me about setting too high a value upon, was blinded, and I was led on by wily steps into the enchanted regions of romance, and penetrated by their subtle influence, gave words to my thoughts before I recollected and was on guard again. But no word or look of Robert Wentworth's wounded my *amour propre* at such times ; my little flights of fancy met with the gravest respect. In truth, he was a great deal more tolerant to what he termed my romance, than to any little slip in my reasoning ; because he had the candour to tell me my ideality was getting starved for want of nourishment, and needed a little

encouragement, whilst my reasoning powers required an occasional snubbing. "And as to pretending you have no romance—you are the most romantic young lady I know. Don't protest, it would not be the least use, though I will not expose you to the world—not even to Lilian."

I only knew that he was gradually teaching me to be less ashamed of such things than I had latterly been, and so rendering me less morbid and more fit to be Philip's wife. Philip should thank him for that as well as other things, by-and-by. The hope that Philip and he would be friends, and that there would be pleasant communion between us three in the future, was very cheering to me. How complete would have been the picture could I have imagined Lilian in it as the wife of Robert Wentworth!

Meantime, everything was flowing smoothly on with the lovers again. I

think that I was the only one at Fairview to note the change which was taking place in Marian Reed. She had never been accustomed to exercise self-control, and was yielding more and more to an infatuation which was making her life miserable.

She loved Arthur Trafford, as such natures do love, with a wild, ungovernable, selfish passion; and with unreasoning anger, altogether refused to accept the existing state of things. She would not accept happiness in any way but one, and moodily dwelt upon what she encouraged herself to believe were her wrongs. Why should she be without a name, dependent upon others' bounty, and denied the love she craved, while Lilian possessed everything? It was easy enough to be amiable when you had all you wanted! But she did not covet all—only love, and that was denied her. All this she shewed me in more ways than one, which roused my suspicion that

she was doing what she could to attract Arthur Trafford, and would have felt no compunction in winning his love from Lilian, had that been possible. There were occasions when it was almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that she was trying to outvie Lilian in the only way she knew how to outvie a rival. I knew that she must be spending a great deal more than was right or necessary upon dress, so constant were the changes she made, availing herself of everything which is invented in the way of ornament by fashionable milliners for fashionable woe; whilst her large handsome white shoulders were thrust upon our notice a great deal more than was in good taste. And as to her conversation, partly loud and self-asserting, partly sentimental, accompanied with languishing glances at her hero from the great black eyes—— But I must not go on. I am afraid I was not inclined to allow her a single good quality just at this time; and

therefore my judgment must, I suppose, be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, allowing for hidden good qualities, which I had not given her credit for possessing, she really was not pleasant as a companion just now.

Much as dear old Mrs. Tipper admired her personally, even she was obliged to acknowledge that Miss Reed was not quite so amiable and easy to get on with as could be desired. Indeed, more than once had I found it necessary to protect the kind little lady from the ill-humour of Marian, and the sharp way with which I was immediately retorted upon did not greatly discomfit me. It was enough that I had the power to keep her within due bounds towards others.

“I think it was specially obnoxious to her to find that I was observant of her demeanour towards Arthur Trafford, and made a point of putting in an appearance when she happened to be *tête-à-tête* with

him. I was gravely displeased, as time went on, to find that he not only suspected the state of Marian Reed's feelings towards him, but amused himself by making it more apparent, feeding her vanity with all sorts of exaggerated compliments, accompanied by languishing glances.

Was this conduct worthy of Lilian's affianced husband? I knew that he did not in reality even admire Marian's style of good looks, and was only amused by her too evident predilection for him. But what was he, to find amusement thus? I asked myself, indignant for Lilian's sake.

"You are very uncomplimentary to Miss Reed, I think, Mr. Trafford," I said one day, when I had been the witness of a scene bordering upon flirtation between them, and could no longer keep silence. Lilian was in the garden with her aunt when he arrived, and Marian Reed had found it out of her power to get rid of me; though she had not scrupled to let me see

that my company was not desired. Arthur Trafford's flattery had been rather more marked than usual, and I lost all patience. "Uncomplimentary!" she ejaculated, looking very much astonished.

Had he not been telling her that she had displayed more than usual taste in her toilet, and was looking dreadfully killing to-night?

"I meant uncomplimentary to your sense, Miss Reed."

"I don't know what you mean."

"I think Mr. Trafford does."

He flushed up, giving me an angry glance. She answered for him.

"I am sure Mr. Trafford did not mean to be uncomplimentary in *any* way," with a little defiant toss of the head and glance towards him.

Of course he could only protest that he did not, and she was perfectly satisfied. He evidently knew better than I did the kind of compliments which would be most

acceptable to her. Indeed I suppose she would not have considered them to be flattery at all, but simply the truth, which there was no harm in his telling her.

"She likes that sort of thing," he said, with a little awkward laugh, when presently he and I were for a few moments alone together. "And I don't see that there can be much harm in saying a few complimentary words to a girl, if it gratifies her, Miss Haddon."

"Well, I am glad that you do not *gratify* her in Lilian's presence, Mr. Trafford; she would perceive what Miss Reed apparently does not."

He reddened again.

"Lilian is so essentially and entirely different in every way. You can hardly expect the same kind of refinement in the other."

"I suppose not; but I cannot see that that is a reason for treating them both

with disrespect. It is quite as ill a compliment to Lilian as to Miss Reed, to flatter the latter's vanity as you do."

"I don't see any ill compliment in telling a good-looking girl that she is so, if she likes to be told it," he repeated. "No one can deny that she is a fine girl, in her way."

"I suppose she is; but I admire Lilian too much to be enthusiastic about Miss Reed's style of beauty, Mr. Trafford."

He was getting more decidedly out of temper, muttering something about some women being so hard upon their own sex, as he turned away.

I had done no good by my interference, only caused them to be a little more guarded in my presence, and perhaps dislike me more. But Marian Reed no longer made any effort to conceal the restless discontent which devoured her. Not for a moment suspecting the cause, Lilian was greatly

puzzled to account for the other's increasing discontent, and redoubled her efforts to please, though she was only snubbed for her pains.

"Do you think that I leave anything undone, Mary?" she would anxiously ask me, when she and I were alone. "Or do you think that Marian's feelings are really deeper than we at first imagined them to be, about—the wrong done to her mother, and that all this luxury jars upon her?" After waiting a moment for an answer, which came not (how could I express my belief as to the real cause of Marian's discomfort?), she went on: "But you know how much I try to spare her, Mary—you know that I would not for the world do anything to remind her of the shame. Do I not share it?"

Yes, I did know. But I could only kiss the sweet brow and murmur some platitude about hoping that things would right themselves in time. I would not attempt to

inculcate any of the worldly wisdom which it had cost me my youth to obtain. Rather was I inclined to encourage her pure faith and trust in others—her ignorance of evil—as long as possible. The pain which comes with one kind of knowledge, I would spare her as long as possible. For the present, it did her no harm to believe a little too much in others ; at least so I told myself.

Lilian ! whatever others might think, *I* knew that your gentleness and forbearance did not proceed from weakness. When the time of trial came, they would see ! It was nearer than I imagined it to be, and came in a different and far more serious form than my gravest fears had foreshadowed. It was nearly six months after Mr. Farrar's death, and there was beginning to be some talk of preparing for the wedding, which was to take place in two months, Lilian having yielded to her lover's importunities the more readily from the knowledge that

she was obeying her father's wishes, when, like a sudden thunder-clap, the shock came.

END OF VOL. I.

